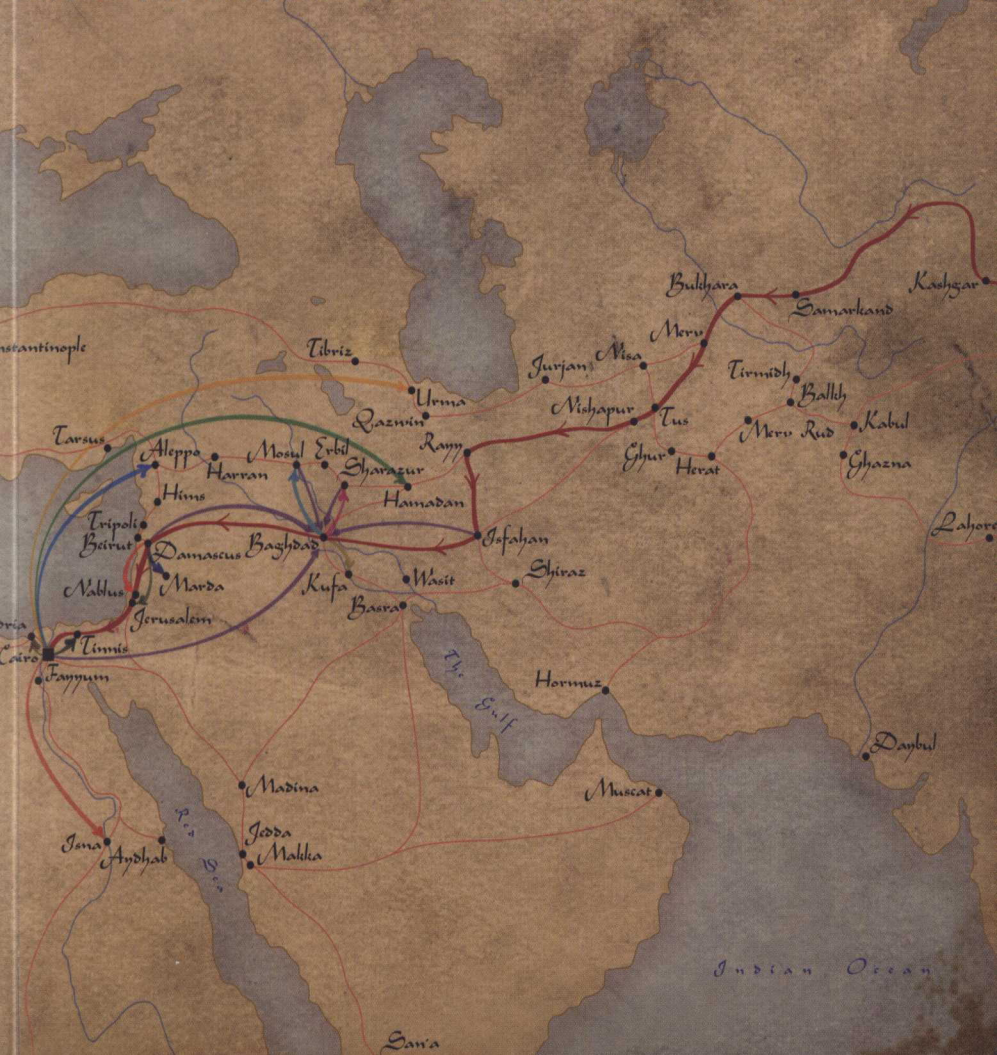


al-Muhaddithat: the women scholars in Islam

MOHAMMAD AKRAM NADWI



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by

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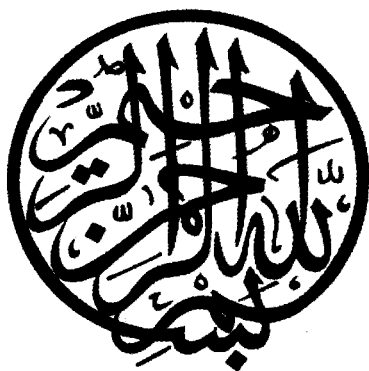
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*Maps drawn by Dr. Alexander Kent, FBCart.S., FRGS.

Photos from the personal collection of Yahya Michot.

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Qāsim ibn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī said: ‘We were at the door of Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith, he came [out] to us. We said: O Abū Naṣr, narrate ḥadīth to us. He said: Do you pay the *ḡakāb* [that is due] on ḥadīth? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is there *ḡakāb* [that is due] on ḥadīth? He said: Yes. When you hear ḥadīth or remembrance of God you should apply it.’

(see pp. 285–86)



Courtyard of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, where Umm al-Dardāʾ (d. 81) taught ḥadīth and *fiqh*, and ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 816) was appointed to the post of principal teacher of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.
(Photo: Yahya Michot)

This book was conceived as a translation of the *muqaddimah* to an as yet unpublished biographical dictionary in Arabic of the women scholars of ḥadīth in Islamic history. However, it was soon apparent that much of the original needed to be adapted, not simply translated. One reason is that this introduction to the material in the Dictionary is not accompanied by that work, and so the material in it needs to be adequately illustrated. Another reason is that the expectations of an English readership are somewhat different from an Arabic one. I know that to be so from questions put to me after talks I have given on the subject and from correspondence following announcement of this book. Those expectations oblige me to say what this book is not, which is rather an awkward way of explaining what it is.

Let me start by stating that this is not an exercise in ‘women’s studies’. I have no specialist knowledge of perspectives associated with that discourse. The admission of ignorance should not be taken as indifference to it. Rather, I hope that people skilled in ‘women’s studies’ will make proper use of the material presented here. That material is, though arranged and organized, a *listing*; it is, by analogy with a word dictionary, much nearer to ‘words’ than ‘sentences’, and far from ‘paragraphs’ linked into an ‘essay’. Much work needs doing on the information before anybody ventures to derive from it value-laden arguments about the past (still less, the future) role of women in Islamic society. Among the next tasks are, starting with the easiest:

selection and composition from the material: e.g., there are, in the Dictionary I have compiled, reams of information on at least a score of individual women that could be turned into distinct biographical studies. Of course, much labour is entailed: the little sketch of Fāṭimah bint Sa’d al Khayr given here (pp. 93–96 below) needed looking up half a dozen different books – but at least the Dictionary enables one to know which books to start with.

quantitative analysis: e.g., relative numbers of *muḥaddithāt* in different times and places, and their preferences within the material available for study. The overview in Chapter 9 lays out the main blocks of the big picture but it needs detailing.

historical and contextual background: e.g., how particular genres of ḥadīth compilation developed and were transmitted – some charts provided here (necessarily scaled down) may indicate directions for such focused inquiry; how ḥadīth study was affected by political events, administrative arrangements, relations between state and society, and by social and economic status; how it was documented; how it was funded (informally, or formally in the *waqf* deeds of the great madrasas/colleges).

thematically-oriented reflection: e.g., as their names show, many *muḥaddithāt* were daughters of men bearing the title ‘qāḍī’, ‘imām’, ‘ḥāfiẓ’ (expert, master), etc. It appears that the men most committed to the education of women, to respecting and treating them as peers in scholarship, and in the authority that derived from that status, were (as people now use this label) the most ‘conservatively’ Islamic – their intellectual genealogy traces to the *Sunnah*; not to (that other long line in Islamic scholarly effort) Aristotle.

My fear is that some readers will not wait for the necessary next phases of work to be undertaken. Vilification of Islam as a misogynist social order is so intense and pervasive that people urgently want assurance that it is not, or was not, or ‘need not’, be so. Scholarly corrective will not suffice to end that vilification since it is not based upon truth, but upon an aversion to Islam as such, perpetuating itself by seeking, and soon finding, instances of abuse of women (and other negatives like misgovernment, etc.) among Muslim communities. Similar failures in other communities are rarely associated with their religious tradition but explained by local factors. One need only compare the level of attention given in television documentary to the situation of women in Pakistan with that of women of equivalent social class in India to realize that such attention is quite particularly targeted on Muslims. In part this is because in India (to stay with that example) many middle-class younger women are beginning to see, and to project, their bodily presence in styles taken from the West, with some accents from local fashions. By contrast, most of their Muslim peers in Pakistan or India are not

doing the same – like many Muslims elsewhere they are not willing to subordinate manners derived from their religious tradition to Western tastes. The exasperation with Islamic ways for showing no consistent tendency to fade out, combined with the ancient aversion to Islam – it predates the modern European languages in which it is expressed – is the principal reason for the virulence of some feminist critique of it. Muslims, understandably, want their religion defended from that.

The feminist agenda, as understood by this outsider to it, has a practical side and a theoretical side. The former is concerned with questions of justice for women: equality in pay, access to education, employment, political representation, etc. No fair-minded person can argue with that. Justice is a virtue; Muslims have no monopoly either on the definition or practice of virtues. Rather, they are to praise the virtues in whoever has them and, within the boundaries of the lawful, compete therein. It would be hard to improve on the conciseness of this statement on the matter by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah (d. 751), greatest of many great students of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728):¹

A Shāfiʿī said: ‘No politics (*siyāsa*) excepting something that corresponds with the Law (*sharʿ*)!’ [...] If in saying ‘excepting something that corresponds with the Law (*sharʿ*)’ you mean ‘which does not run against what the Law has pronounced upon’, it is correct. If [on the other hand] you mean [by that] ‘No politics except for what the Law has pronounced upon’, it is an error [...]. *When the signs (amāra) of justice appear and its face is radiant, by whatever means it may be, there [you find] the Law of God and His religion.* God, Praised is He, is too aware, too wise and too just to restrict the ways of justice, its signs and its marks, to a single thing, to then reject something that may be more evident than those [and] to not judge, when such a thing exists and subsists, that it is obligatory. Through the ways that He has instituted as Law, He has rather, Praised is He, made it plain that what is aimed at by Him is

¹I here quote (with italics added) the translation by Yahya MICHOT, in his discussion of sundry discourses of Ibn Taymiyyah on *Muslims under non-Muslim Rule* (2006), 105; the passage is from *al-Turuq al-hukmiyyah* (ed. S. Umran, Cairo, 1423/2002), 17–18.

that justice be made to rule among His servants and that people strictly practise equity. *Whatever the ways by which justice and equity obtain, they are a part of the religion and do not run against it.*

The aim of undoing injustices suffered by women (wherever they are suffered) is acceptable to Muslims. But it is entangled in the theoretical underpinning of feminist critique, which is not acceptable but which nevertheless invades Muslim minds. I hear it in the form and content of the questions put to me. The form is: if men can do X, why can't women do X? The X could be 'pray in a mosque', 'interpret the law', 'issue fatwas', 'lead prayer', 'travel unaccompanied', 'behave chastely without scarfing the head', etc. This approach succeeds in embarrassing Muslims by framing each issue as one of equity: if men can X and women can't, or if women must X but men needn't, it does appear to be unfair. Now, it is not possible here to deal properly with such questioning of Islam – as I have said plainly, I am not qualified to take on 'women's studies' discourse – but I do owe it to the women whose scholarly authority this book celebrates to say briefly what is necessary to distinguish their perspective. These were not feminists, neither consciously nor unconsciously. They were above all else, like the men scholars, *believers*, and they got and exercised the same authority by virtue of reasoning with the same methods from the same sources as the men, and by having at the same time, just as the men did, a reputation for *taqwā* (wariness of God), righteousness and strong intellect.

My concern is that some readers will misunderstand the resemblance, in form and content, between the questions above and those found in some of the Prophetic ḥadīths cited in this book – the women among the Companions say: men are mentioned in the Book, what about us? men are commanded to do this and that, while we are stuck with the children, what about us? Also, readers will find in the book abundant examples of women teaching ḥadīth classes of men and women students in the principal mosques and colleges (when established, from the sixth century AH on); issuing fatwas; interpreting the Qurʾān; challenging the rulings of qāḍīs; criticizing the rulers; preaching to people to reform their ways – and in all this being approved

and applauded by their peers among the men... The sheer number of examples from different periods and regions will establish that the answer to some of the 'If men can, why can't women?' questions is 'Men can and women can too'. That is correct, and yet it is not right.

It is not right because the approach embedded in the question 'if men can, why can't women?' is, from the Islamic perspective of the *muhaddithāt*, misleading in itself. It leads astray by three main routes. (1) Except as an amusing irony the question is never put the other way – 'if women can X, why can't men?' Rather, it is taken as given that the traditional domain of women is inferior: running a home, bringing up children are menial chores, unpaid in money or prestige, not a calling. So women should strive to take responsibility in the traditionally male domain of earning a living and competing for economic and political power, and the domain of family life – however important it may be – must be squeezed in somewhere somehow between the public domain commitments of the man and woman. To the extent that a social order moves towards that goal, women are freed of economic dependency, of any need to 'wait upon' men, acting as fathers or husbands (or priests or professors, etc.), telling them what to do.

I have worked through much material over a decade to compile biographical accounts of 8,000 *muhaddithāt*. Not one of them is reported to have considered the domain of family life inferior, or neglected duties therein, or considered being a woman undesirable or inferior to being a man, *or* considered that, given aptitude and opportunity, she had no duties to the wider society, outside the domain of family life.

(2) The form of the question 'if men can, why can't women?' gives primacy to *agency* as the definitive measure of the value of being human. What counts is what one *can do*, not what one *can be*; moreover, this approach defines agency in terms of challenging an established order of privilege – here, the privileges men have – so that the emotions and attitudes in play are characterized by *resistance*, and success is measured in terms of how many *can-do* items have been *won over* from the exclusive ownership of men. Thus, an argument may be contrived along the lines of: these

extraordinary women, the *muḥaddithāt*, were – perhaps unconsciously – striving from within (i.e. resisting) against an oppressive system, and they achieved as much dignity and liberty of action as the system could tolerate. (The implication is that now we can do better, go further, etc.)

This argument will not hold against the information I have presented. It will become clear from the first three chapters of this book that there is no period when men have certain privileges to speak or think or act, and then women find a way to ‘invade’ the men’s ground. Rather, the women and men both know, *from the outset of Islam*, what their duties are: women are there teaching and interpreting the religion from the time that the duty to do so passed, with the Prophet’s death, to the scholars among his Companions. Indeed, by the assessment of some later scholars, the Companion most often referred to for fatwas or *fiqh* was ‘Ā’ishah bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. From the Companions it passed to their Successors. Women are prominent among both, and among the later generations, who continued (or revived) that precedent. There is no evidence of any campaign, overt or covert, to win rights from men for women.

Undue emphasis on agency (being able to *do*) as a measure of dignity and liberty is an error of more serious import. In the believers’ perspective, the best of what we do is worship and, especially, prayer. Prayer, in its immediate, outward effects in the world seems to do nothing. However, the doer of it (and only the doer) knows how he or she is measured by it – the quality of presence of will, of reflection and repentance, of the courage to stand alone and quite still on the line between fear and hope before God. Prayer builds (and tests) the stability of the qualities that Muslims have treasured most in their scholars, men or women, namely wariness (or ‘piety’ in relation to God) and righteousness (in relation to other people). It is in the practice and teaching of these qualities that the *muḥaddithāt* were engaged. Their personal authority as teachers was no doubt a function, in part, of sheer technical mastery of the material they were teaching, but it was also a function of their ability to con-

vey their conviction about it, and its effect on their character, their *being*.

Because of the need to set down a lot of examples of the material about the *muhaddithāt*, I have, with one exception, avoided lengthy citation of the ḥadīths themselves that they were teaching. The one exception is ‘Ā’ishah’s recollection of the incident of the *ifk*, the slander against her. It is a long story (below, p. 190–95). It ends when her husband, the Prophet, advises her, if she has done wrong to repent and God will forgive her. She knows she is innocent and so turns away from the world that will not vindicate her, saying ‘there is no help but in God’. When the Revelation declares her innocent, her mother instructs her to now go to her husband. She flatly refuses: ‘By God, I will not go to him.’ Because she is a teenager at the time of this incident, it is tempting to read in this disobedience the accents of rebelling adolescence. But in ‘Ā’ishah’s mature telling of it, it is presented as the moment when her faith is perfected, when she realizes that any obedience that is not, first, obedience to God is a burden to the self, an indignity; and every obedience that is for only God is full liberty. She turns away from parents, husband, from the Prophet himself: ‘By God, I will not go to him. And I will not praise except God.’ The power of agency that comes from such perfected surrender to God (*islām*) is evident in her conduct when, having led a battle against Muslims – an action she sincerely (and rightly) repented – and suffered a humiliating rout, she went directly to Basrah, where people flocked to her, not as a political faction, but to learn her ḥadīth and her *fiqh*, her understanding of Islam. The rout took nothing from her personal energy – nor from her reputation as a resource for knowledge of the religion. The all but incredible feats of mental strength and stamina, which are reported of the women scholars of the later periods, derive from the same kind and source of agency, the same achieved freedom of being.

(3) The ‘If men can, why can’t women’ approach may also mislead readers of the material in this book for another reason. It rests on a string of unsafe assumptions: that the differences given in nature (gender is the one we are discussing), if enhanced

by law and custom, must lead to injustices *necessarily*; that those injustices should and can be reduced by social, legal and (since we *can do*) biological engineering; that such engineering is safe because the differences as given have little value in themselves, or in their connectedness with anything else.

I will not go into the familiar arguments about the negative effects of erasing the social expression of gender differences – from weakening the boundaries of personal and family life so that it is spilled into public space for the entertainment of others, to confused sexual behaviours, to impairment of the desire and drive, perhaps even the capacity, to have children. But the social experiment is only just into its second generation. So far there is not much evidence that women's entry into the high levels of government, business, etc. has led to any change in either the goals or the operations of these activities. The women do them just as well as the men and in just the same way; which suggests that their being women is not engaged when at work. But work patterns and structures take time to alter; it is rather early to be pronouncing on the long-term costs (personal and social) that have come along with the gains in justice for women. Those gains matter greatly. Here, I want only to explain that there is another effort for justice, coming from a different grounding, from different assumptions, and its distinctiveness should not be missed.

As this book shows, women scholars acquired and exercised the same authority as men scholars. Both did so *within* the well-known Islamic conventions of *ḥijāb* and of avoiding, to the extent practicable, such mixing of men and women as can lead to forbidden relationships. As Muslims understand it, *ḥijāb* is commanded by God as law-giver, as a social expression and marking of the gender differences commanded by Him as creator. The practice of *ḥijāb* is thus not dependent upon having reasons for it but upon its being His command. However, God as law-giver commands nothing that He as creator does not also enable, and a part of His enabling obedience is that His commands (like His creation) *are* intelligible, so that obedience can flow

from a more willing assent. Hence, Muslims are allowed to ask: what is the point of *ḥijāb*?

Muslims, men and women alike, are required to control their behaviour, how they look at, and how they appear to, each other. But only of women is it required that, in public, they cover their hair, and wear an over-garment, or clothing that does not caricature their bodily form: the meaning is – the opposite of modern Western conventions – to conceal, not reveal and project, their bodily presence. The meaning is not that women should be absent or invisible, but that they be present and visible with the power of their bodies switched off. What are the benefits of this? (1) Most of the time men and women dress to look normal, not to entice one another. But dress normality for men – except for the ignominies and anxieties of early adolescence – is derived from what other men see as normal; women, even when dressing only for each other, still evaluate their look among themselves by its appeal to men. *Ḥijāb* can screen women from the anxiety, at least when out in public, of being subject to and evaluated by the sexual gaze of men. (2) *Ḥijāb* has an educative function: it teaches chastity to the individual, who learns by it to inhibit the need to be appealing to men, and to the society in which the need to be self-disciplined is signalled and facilitated. (3) *Ḥijāb*, publicly and emphatically, marks gender differences; it therefore enables women – always assuming that they are active in the public domain – to project their being women without being sized up as objects of desire.

None of that will at all impress those whose landscape is intolerably impoverished by the absence of attractively presented women, or who need the seasoning of flirtation and associated behaviours to get through their day. Nor can it impress those who do not see *ḥijāb* except in terms of its symbolizing the oppression of women, who are prevented by it from ever enjoying ‘the wind in their hair’ or ‘the sun on their bodies’. (In fact, such enjoyment is not forbidden, only the display of it to men.) Women who declare that they have *chosen* to wear *ḥijāb* are said to have internalized their oppression, that is, they are not allowed the dignity of being believed. Yet no-one says of the

adolescent or younger girls who hurt their own bodies in order to have (or because they never can have) the right 'look': 'they have internalized an oppressive system'. Rather, these negative outcomes are said to be offset by the benefits, overall, to the fashion and entertainment industries. It would be decent to allow Muslims to say: overall, the benefits of *ḥijāb* outweigh any nuisance in it.

Anyway, despite pressures, believing men and women will not, for the sake of Western tastes, abandon the commands of God and His Messenger to practice *ḥijāb*. It is a part of the faith. The great shaykhahs who are the subject of this book, never doubted its obligatoriness. Nor is there the least evidence that it inhibited them from teaching men, or learning from men. Clearly, however, there are practical issues involved of how space was used, how voices were projected so questions could be taken and answered, and how students and teachers could know how the other had reacted. There is no direct discussion of these practical matters in the sources. One infers from that, that people acted in good faith and, in the particular, local conditions, made such arrangements as were necessary to convey knowledge of the religion to those who came seeking it.

Within Islamic tradition, it is generally accepted that one should guard oneself and society from whatever leads to the prohibited. Inducements to the prohibited cannot strictly be called prohibited, but one tries to behave as if they were without calling them so. It is not so well accepted that impediments to what is commanded or expressly permitted should be minimized. Certainly, the risk of sin is not a sufficient ground for preventing behaviour that is in itself lawful and does not intend or systematically induce the unlawful. There is the ḥadīth about the man who came to the Prophet to confess that, in the marketplace of Madinah, he had kissed a woman who was just there doing her shopping. The Prophet did not order the market closed or forbid women doing lawful business in it. First, he turned away, trying not to hear the man's confession; but the man persisted. Then, after the prayer, the Prophet asked the man to confirm that he too had prayed. He did so. Then God sent down the verse (*Hūd*, 11. 114: *Establish the prayer at the ends*

of the day and approaches of the night. Surely good deeds take away bad deeds. That is a reminder for those who remember. The man asked: 'Is this for me?' The Prophet said: 'For whoever takes it.'¹ The meaning is that it is for everyone who takes the opportunity, by prayer, to undo the attraction of sin so that it is not established in the heart and therefore can have very limited, if any, entail.

One reason we do not have more records about more of the *muḥaddithāt* is a broad interpretation of the duty of *ḥijāb*: so much weight is given to keeping public and private domains distinct that details about the accomplishments of the women of the household are held undisclosed. A reliable source states, for example, that Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Najjār (d. 643) had some 400 women teachers.² Who were they? I was able to track down the names of only a few of them. Al-Qurashī (d. 775) wrote a book on Ḥanafī jurists with a section on women called *Ṭabaqāt al-nisā'*, which he begins: 'This is a book in which I will mention what has come to my knowledge about the women scholars among our companions [i.e. fellow-Ḥanafī jurists]. I got very little information [about them] and there is no doubt that the state of women is based on covering (*ṣatr*).'³

The misreading or misuse of this book from a 'women's studies' approach is possible because that approach has no basis in the sources of the *Sunnah*. Sadly, there is also a lot of Islamic scholarship – unlike that of the women whose work is recorded here – that is also weakly grounded in the *Sunnah*. An extreme example is the opinion that women should not be taught writing, because if they are they will write letters (presumably of some improper kind). Apart from its self-evident absurdity, and its preventing much good, this opinion is flatly contradicted by the

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Mawāqūt al-ṣalāh*, bāb *al-ṣalāh kaffārah*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tawbah*, bāb *qawli-hi ta'ālā inna l-ḥasanāt yudhhibna al-sayyi'āt*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, bāb *wa min sūrah Hūd*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Iqāmat al-ṣalāh*, bāb *mā jā'a fī anna al-ṣalāta kaffārah*. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, xxiii. 133. ³ AL-QURASHĪ, *al-Jawābir al-muḍīyyah fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*, iv. 1–2.

precedent of the Companions and their Successors. I will not labour the point: there is no need to as the book is packed with fully referenced counter-examples to that kind of thinking.

Because of the number of names and the need to identify people by giving most elements of the name and (if known) date of death, it saved some space to use only Hijri dates. That is in any case my practice in the original Arabic from which this work is adapted. Readers who find this disorienting, may find the table below useful. The 1st Muḥarram of year 1 AH corresponds to 16 July 622 AD.

718	100 AH	1203	600 AH	1688	1100 AH
815	200	1300	700	1785	1200
912	300	1397	800	1882	1300
1009	400	1494	900	1979	1400
1106	500	1591	1000	15/7/2007	29/6/1428

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As this work is about teaching of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, it is proper always to remember the supplication: *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* (God pray over him and grant him peace). I end in hope that good comes by this book to those who brought it about and to its readers – it may do so only if He wills, to Whom all praise and thanks are due.

Mohammad Akram
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Introduction

It surprises people to learn that women, living under an Islamic order, could be scholars, that is, hold the authority that attaches to being knowledgeable about what Islam commands, and therefore sought after and deferred to. The typical Western view is that no social order has (or aspires to have) more 'religion' in it than an Islamic one, and the more 'religion' a society has in it, the more restricted will be the scope in that society for women to enjoy agency and authority. Behind that is the assumption that religion is 'really' a human construct, done mainly by men and therefore done to secure advantages for them at the expense of women. Muslims, of course, do not share this view.

One of the reasons for Muslim conviction that the Qurʾān is God's word is that it is, though expressed in the vehicle of the human language of its first audience (Arabic), free of limiting human perspectives. The Qurʾān as a whole has neither narrative focus or structure: it is not the epic of an individual or a tribe, on which generations have laboured to give meaning to what the individual or tribe did or had done to them. It has no restrictive geographical focus: it does not build up or explain the charisma of a place or place-name. It does not build up or justify some particular human institution such as kingship or priesthood. It is not, on the other hand, either a random or closely connected assemblage of abstract moral or legal or philosophical principles. For believers it is a connecting of the divine will directly with a real human situation, made exemplary by that connection. It addresses the people in that situation with commands and consolation, with threat and promise, and guides them to what will better prepare their living in this world to earn contentment in the eternal life hereafter. Quite explicitly, it also gives to the

precepts and practice of the mortal on whom it was sent down a unique authority. The Qur'ān has authority, and the Messenger's *Sunnah* has authority by it. The divine promise is that these paired sources of guidance suffice as the framework within which the believers can order their affairs in a way that pleases their Creator. Accordingly, while Muslims have disagreed and fought over just about everything else, they have never done so about the authority of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. This book is a demonstration of women's access to that authority.

The best guidance, unassisted by Revelation, that human beings might hope for is that their law-givers establish rules as if 'from behind a veil of ignorance', as if they did not know who would benefit by such rules and who would suffer. In reality that can never happen, because human perspectives are always, even with the best of intentions, partial. In practice human law-givers always prefer their own tastes and interests, being always ready to believe that their interests are in fact to everybody's advantage in the long term – and so their laws prefer some people over others – for example, property-owners over those without property, or men over women, or the interests of their own nation over some other. There is some consolation in the fact that, through the effort of learning from experience, revision of past errors is possible.

In the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* Muslims believe they have a framework of guidance that is strictly impartial and sufficient because God's knowledge and mercy encompass all beings and all their pasts and futures. Any human derivation from and within that framework is subject to revision, but the framework itself is not. Accordingly, in the Islamic tradition, to say 'God says in His Book' decides the argument. Where it is not certain how the guidance of the Qur'ān is to be acted upon, Muslims look to the example of how God's Messenger acted in the same or a similar situation. The record of his example (*Sunnah*) is now, for all practical purposes, conveyed through a body of texts, known singly and collectively as ḥadīth (lit. 'saying'). A man who becomes expert in knowledge of the ḥadīth is called a *muḥaddith*; a woman, *muḥaddithah* (plural, *muḥaddithāt*). Knowledge of ḥadīth is deci-

sive in informing *fiqh*, understanding the guidance as (legal) rules and (social) norms; one who attains skill in *fiqh* is called *faqīh(ab)*. It is decisive in informing *iftāʾ*, the responsa (fatwas) of scholars to questions the people put to them on specific matters; ‘mufti’ means one who gives fatwas. Knowledge of ḥadīth is decisive also in informing *tafsīr*, interpretative commentary of the Qurʾān, since, by its own command, the Prophet’s understanding of it must be preferred over anyone else’s. Readers should understand that, in the orthodox or Sunni tradition, a Muslim is not bound by anybody else’s *fiqh* or *iftāʾ* or *tafsīr*. The scholars in Islam dispose authority in society; they do not directly dispose power. The distinction was (and remains) of the utmost importance for their credibility and legitimacy with the people.

Women attained high rank in all spheres of knowledge of the religion, and, as this book will show, they were sought after for their *fiqh*, for their fatwas, and for *tafsīr*. Primarily, I am concerned here with their achievement and role as *muhaddithāt*. In this chapter I set out, first, the overall impact of Qurʾān and *Sunnah* in changing attitudes to women; in the second section, I explain different dimensions of the change as instituted or urged by Qurʾān and *Sunnah*; in the third what the women themselves did in the formative period of Islam so that men, in a sense, *had to* accept that change.

THE IMPACT OF THE BOOK AND SUNNAH

The Qurʾān rebukes the people of the *jāhiliyyah* (the Ignorance before Islam) for their negative attitude to women (*al-Nahl*, 16. 58–59): *When news is brought to one of them of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is chafing within! He hides himself from his folk, because of the evil he has had news of. Shall he keep it in disdain, or bury it in the dust? Ah – how evil the judgement they come to!* The costly prospect of bringing up a daughter (a son was expected to enhance a clan’s military and economic potential) perhaps explains this negative response to the birth of a girl. Burying infant girls alive was a custom among some (not all) of the Arab tribes of the time. The Qurʾān warns of retribution for this gross atrocity

on the day *When the infant buried alive shall be asked for what sin she was killed* (*al-Takwīr*, 81. 8–9).

Human rights and duties indicated in the Qurʾān are pegged to two fundamentals that are the same for men and women – namely their being creatures and slaves of God, their Creator and Lord, and their being the issue of a single human self. God has said in the Qurʾān (*al-Nisāʾ*, 4. 1): *O humankind, be wary of your Lord who created you from a single self, and from it created its pair, and from the pair of them scattered many men and women. Be wary of God, through Whom you ask of one another [your rights and needs] and close kindred:*¹ *God is ever-watchful over you.* And (*al-Aʿrāf*, 6. 189): *He it is Who created you from a single self, and made from it its mate, so that he might settle at rest with her.* Male and female are created for the same purpose: *I have not created jinn and humankind except so that they worship Me* (*al-Dhāriyāt*, 51. 56). The Qurʾānic term *ʿabd* signifies both ‘worshipper’ and ‘slave’ in relation to God. The duties owed to God, and the virtues that ensue from the effort to do them, are the same for men and women. This is affirmed in a well-known Qurʾānic verse. The verse, and the occasion of its revelation are recorded in this ḥadīth, narrated by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Shaybah:

I heard Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: I asked the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – Why are we [women] not mentioned in the Qurʾān as the men are mentioned? [...] Then I was alerted that day by his call on the pulpit. [...] At that moment I was combing my hair. I gathered up my hair and went to one of the rooms of my house; I listened hard. I heard him saying on the pulpit: O people, God says in His Book: *The muslim men and muslim women; the believing men and believing women; the men who are obedient [to God] and women who are obedient [to God]; the men who are truthful and the women who are truthful; the men who are persevering and patient and the women who are persevering and patient; the men who give alms and the women who give alms; the men who are humble and the women who are humble; the men who fast and the*

¹‘close kindred’: literally, ‘the wombs’, here understood to mean the issue thereof.

*women who fast; the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who remember God much and the women who remember God much – God has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.*¹

The burden of duties owed to God is carried individually: responsibilities in this world and the recompense hereafter are particular to each self. The diversity of human aptitudes and of the opportunities that come into particular lives must be seen in the light of God's affirmation that He does not burden any self with a responsibility that He has not also enabled it to discharge. We do not find in the orthodox Islamic tradition, therefore, any argument for an intermediate authority between human beings and God. In that tradition, all questions of how to serve God, as also of how to settle differences or disputes between people in their worldly affairs, are referred to the guidance of Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. Access to this guidance is not a function of belonging to a particular group (say, the tribe of Quraysh rather than some other Arab or non-Arab people), or to a particular gender (men rather than women) or to a particular social class (say, the nobility rather than slaves). It is a function strictly of knowledge of and personal adherence to Qur'ān and *Sunnah*.

Having 'the knowledge', and the conscientious preserving, transmitting and understanding of it, is the strong basis for the public authority that learned Muslims, men and women, were able to command. Necessarily, there were different opinions on the import of the knowledge people had, but the differences were not settled on the basis of the gender or the tribe or socio-economic class of the person who conveyed it.

An example is the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays. She reports that when she was divorced from her husband, the Prophet did not require him to provide accommodation and expenses for her until the end of her *'iddah*, the period after which she would be free to re-marry. 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb rejected this ḥadīth; so did Zayd ibn Thābit, 'Ā'ishah, and other jurists. They argued that it contradicts the Qur'ān's command that men must support

¹ AL-ḤĀKIM, *al-Mustadrak*, ii. 416. The verse cited is *al-Aḥzāb*, 33. 35.

divorced wives during the *‘iddah*. If they had been motivated by ‘patriarchal attitudes’, they would surely have acted on the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah, since it appears to favour men. In any event (details will come in the next chapter) Fāṭimah was never stopped from narrating the ḥadīth; it was recorded in all the books; over time, for their different reasons, jurists took different positions about it. It would have been so if the same ḥadīth had been narrated by a man, say the ex-husband, rather than the ex-wife.

Another example is narrated by Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab about ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb during the caliphate of Abū Bakr. ‘Umar divorced the mother of his son ‘Āṣim, then saw her somewhere with their son and took him from her. She appealed her case to Abū Bakr. The caliph judged that ‘Āṣim ibn ‘Umar remain with his mother until grown up or until she re-married.¹ This verdict followed the *Sunnah*, established by the report (among others) that a woman came to the Prophet and said: ‘O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – my womb was his vessel, my arm was his container, and my breast was his drink. And now his father claims that he is going to snatch him from me. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: You have more right over the child while you do not re-marry.’² Neither ‘Umar’s rank as one of the most senior of the Companions, nor his being Abū Bakr’s dearest friend, nor his argument that he had more to give the boy, swayed the judgement in his favour. Abū Bakr said: ‘O ‘Umar, the moisture of her lips is better for him than the honey in your house.’³

A great many examples will be presented in the course of this book of the imāms in ḥadīth and law – called imāms because they are followed – who had women teachers and praised their learning, intelligence and piety. In so doing, they were following the lead of the Companions and their Successors – and again, many examples will come – who turned to the learned women

¹ AL-BAYHAQĪ, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, *Nafaqāt*, bāb *al-umm tataḥawwaj wa yaskutu ḥaqqu-hā min ḥadānat al-walad wa yantaqilu ilā jaddati-h*. ² ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *man aḥaqq bi-l-walad*. ³ AL-MARGHINĀNĪ, *al-Hidāyah*, ii. 317.

of their generation for general advice, for a particular ruling, for help in interpreting and implementing the guidance of Qur'an and *Sunnah*. To be sure, it was largely men who held the formal posts like *qāḍī*, but they could discharge their duties only from the authority of Qur'an and *Sunnah*, to which women also could appeal. A striking case is that of 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān, the great *tābi'īyyah* (Successor), *muḥaddithah* and *faqīhah*, who intervened in a court case in Madinah to prevent a miscarriage of justice (details, p. 279–80). It is remarkable enough that she knew that the case was in progress and the circumstances of it and what sentence the *qāḍī* had passed but not yet carried out. Many famous men jurists were resident and active in the city; none of them intervened. What is astonishing is that she did intervene, and no-one questioned her right to do so. The defendant was a non-Muslim, not known to 'Amrah except as the defendant in this suit, in which she had no personal, private interest. The *qāḍī* reversed his decision and released the defendant only because he could have no argument against the authority of the ḥadīth she was able to cite. He did not know or remember it, or simply failed to bring it to bear when reaching his judgement: once he knew the ḥadīth, he did as a Muslim should – he acted upon it.

The distance is huge between a society in which some men held womanhood in such contempt that they could countenance burying infant daughters alive, and one in which they would defer to the authority of a woman just because she had knowledge that they did not. It is an extraordinary distance to have covered within a single generation. How was it possible?

THE WOMEN'S AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED BY THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

The short answer is that it was possible because, once they believed the Revelation to be the word of their Creator, it would have been irrational for them not to act upon its command. The Qur'an speaks about women in general and specific terms. It does not associate womanhood with inferiority or deficiency of any sort, or any primordial sin, or any disposition to sin not

also found in men, or any disposition to induce sin in others not also found in men. It does not regard women as an appendage of men, but as distinct beings, each called individually, just as are men. The language of the Qur'ān, Arabic, like many others, uses masculine forms to mean women also, unless context expressly excludes them. The grammar does not require women to be expressly included; it is all the more striking therefore when that explicit including occurs. I have quoted above verse 33. 35 enumerating the virtues, distinctly for men and women. Starting with the next verse in that sūrah, here are a few more examples:

It is not for a believing man or believing woman, when God and His Messenger have decided a matter [...] (al-Aḥzāb, 33. 36). Never will I allow to be lost the work of any of you, male or female (Al 'Imrān, 3. 195). Whoever does righteous deeds, male or female, and is a believer, him We shall enliven to a good life, and We shall pay them certainly a reward proportioned to the best of what they used to do (al-Nahl, 16. 97). Whoever does righteous deeds, from among the male or the female, and he is a believer, those will enter Paradise [...] (al-Nisā', 4. 124). The believing men and believing women are protecting friends (awliyā') of one another, they bid to good (al-ma'rūf), and forbid from evil (al-munkar); they establish the prayer and give the alms (ṣakāh) and obey God and His Messenger (al-Tawbah, 9. 71).

Of course, there is subject-matter where we would expect women to be mentioned – for example, the injunctions, ethical and legal, related to marriage and divorce; or the command to be kind to parents, where the travail of mothers is singled out (*Luqmān*, 31. 14; *al-Aḥqāf*, 46. 15). But even where women are not the subject, the Book is concerned to include them in the call to Islam: the threat and the promise apply to them no less or more than to men.

For believers, the Book is (as I explained earlier) a direct engagement of the divine will with a real human situation, made exemplary by that engagement. Of several such occasions related to women, one of the best known is the background of the sūrah called *al-Mujādalah*, 'the disputing'. Yūsuf ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Salām narrates from Khawlah bint Tha'labah (wife of Aws ibn al-Sāmit the brother of 'Ubādah ibn Sāmit) that she said:

One day my husband entered upon me. He talked to me about something and he got annoyed. So I answered him back. He said: You are to me 'as the back of my mother' [a formula of repudiation]. Then he left and sat in a gathering of his people. Then he came back to me. He wanted me, and I refrained [from him], then he pulled me by force and I struggled with him. Then I overcame him by what a weak woman can overcome [a man by] and I said: By Him in Whose hand is Khawlah's soul, never will your hand reach me until God sends down His judgement regarding my and your case. Then I came to the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – complaining to him [about] what [treatment] I had received from my husband. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: He is your husband and your cousin, so be wary of God. Then God sent down [the verses, from 58. 1]: *God has heard the speech of her who disputes with you concerning her husband, and complains to God. And God is hearing the exchange between you both. God is all-hearing, all-seeing.* Then God's Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Ask him to free a slave [by way of expiation]. I said, O Messenger of God, he does not have any slave to free. He said: Then he should fast two continuous months. I said: O Messenger of God, he is an old and elderly person, he cannot fast. He – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Then he should feed sixty poor people. I said: By God, he does not own anything to feed the poor with. Then he said: We will help him with a big container of dates. I said: I will help him with another container. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – gave that [for him] in charity.¹

(The Qur'ānic verses not cited above (58. 2–5) go on to forbid use of the ugly formula of repudiation, and to specify the acts of expiation for the utterance of false oaths, as in the ḥadīth.)

By calling women to Islam directly, the Book compels men to recognize them as independent moral beings. For a clear example of that, see (below, p. 289) the response of 'Umar – at this time the ruler of a mighty empire – to a public scolding by the same Khawlah bint Tha'labah, whose ḥadīth we have just read, and how he explains his response.

¹ AL-MIZZĪ (d. 742), *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxviii. 313–14.

Similarly, the Qurʾān establishes for women a distinct legal individuality, through rights of property and inheritance, and marriage contracts. The men are required to provide for their families; the women are not. Their property, including the dowry, remains theirs through the marriage, though they may choose to spend on their husbands (as in the example above) or their children, as free-will offering or charity. (This seeming inequality favouring women is balanced by the Qurʾān's stipulation of different inheritance portions for sons and daughters: *al-Nisāʾ*, 4. 7, 11). On marriage, the Qurʾān (*al-Baqarah*, 2. 232) declares the woman's competence to choose: *Do not obstruct them (lā taḍulū-hunna) from marrying their husbands, if they mutually agree in the normal way (bi-l-maʿrūf)*. One Khansāʾ bint Khidhām al-Anṣāriyyah al-Awsiyah came before the Prophet to protest that her father had married her to someone she did not like. The Prophet annulled that marriage.¹ ʿĀʾishah has narrated that a young woman called on her and said: 'My father has married me to his nephew to raise [the nephew's] low class and I am not happy with this marriage.' ʿĀʾishah asked her to wait until the Prophet came. When he did, the woman informed him and he sent for the father. Then, in the father's presence he entrusted the matter to the young woman directly. She said: 'I have now allowed what my father did. I [only] wanted to teach the women that the fathers do not own anything of the matter.'²

Another illustration of the legal competence of women is the right to grant refuge to a stranger or enemy, which is then binding on the community. Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Taymī narrates one such incident concerning Abū l-ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabīʿ. This man was an unbeliever formerly married to the Prophet's daughter, Zaynab. He and his trading caravan returning from Syria were captured in a raid by the Muslims and brought back

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *idhā ṣawwaj al-rajul ibnatu-hu wa hiya kārihatun fa-nikāḥu-hu mardūd*. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *yankih al-abu wa ghayru-hu al-bikr wa-l-thayyib illā bi-riḍā-hā*; AL-NASAʾĪ, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *al-bikr yuṣawwiju-hā abū-hā wa hiya kārihatun*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *man ṣawwaja ibnata-hu wa hiya kārihatun*.

to Madinah in year 6 AH. There he made his way to Zaynab, begged refuge and she granted it. She stood at her door and called out in a loud voice: 'I have granted protection to Abū l-^ʿĀṣ ibn al-Rabi'. The Prophet confirmed that the people had heard this announcement and then he said: 'The believers are one hand against other people. The lowest of the believers can grant protection on their behalf. And we have granted protection to whoever she has granted protection to.' Later, at Zaynab's request, the goods of Abū l-^ʿĀṣ were restored to him. However, while he remained an unbeliever, he was forbidden to go near to Zaynab. He returned to Makkah and discharged his obligations with the goods, then embraced Islam and made his way back to Madinah in Muḥarrām of the following year. The Prophet restored his marriage to Zaynab.¹

Another such incident concerns Umm Hānī, told by herself. 'I said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – the son of my mother [meaning her brother 'Alī] claims that he is going to kill a man to whom I have granted protection, So-and-so son of Hubayrah. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: 'We have granted protection to whoever you have granted protection to, O Umm Hānī.'²

That women can think and act independently in such ways is the ground upon which the final judgement of their actions is based – as is the case for men. Women can choose the wrong path as well as the right one. The Qur'ānic example of the former are the wives of the prophets Lūṭ (Lot) and Nūḥ (Noah); of the latter, the wife of Pharaoh, and the mother of the prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) (see *al-Taḥrīm*, 66. 10–12). Pharaoh's wife is praised for her spiritual insight, and her moral courage in refusing to be intimidated by her husband's arrogance and evil. Maryam is an example of perfect faith and purity (see *Āl ʿImrān*, 3. 37, 40–42). She suffers what was decreed for her of the slanders of her

¹ IBN SAʿD, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 33. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Jizyah wa-l-muwādaʿah, bāb amān al-nisāʾ wa jiwāri-hinn*. MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṣalāh al-muṣafirīn wa qaṣri-bā...*

people without any diminution of trust in God. The portrait of her is one of the most moving passages in the Qurʾān, specially the account of how she endures pain when the prophet ʿĪsā is born, and how she is comforted after that (*Maryam*, 19. 16–34). Another remarkable portrait is that of the Queen of Sabāʾ: she is a model of wise political leadership, intellectual curiosity and, eventually, spiritual insight (*al-Naml*, 27. 23–44).

Alongside the Revelation, there was the teaching and example of the Prophet. He was not teaching only the men. The women were included in the public assemblies when he preached; he also set time aside for them, separately from the men, and he dealt with their questions personally when they came to him or to his wives. A full account of this effort will come in Chapter 2. The Prophet, obedient to the Qurʾān's command, consulted his Companions, the women as well as the men, before critical decisions. He accepted their counsel if it seemed right to him. A famous incident of this kind happened on the occasion of the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah agreed with the unbelievers of Makkah. After the battle of Badr, this was the most important turning-point in the formative history of Islam.

The Muslims had gone to Makkah in the expectation of doing the ḥajj, but in the end, the unbelievers refused them entry to the city. After tense negotiations, the terms of the truce agreed included the Muslims' returning to Madinah without doing the ḥajj. This and other terms seemed to some of the Muslims humiliating and one-sided. The Prophet ordered his Companions to sacrifice their animals and shave their heads (to indicate coming out of the state of *iḥrām*, the end of pilgrimage sanctity). The narrator of this ḥadīth says: 'By God, no single man from among them stood up on that [command to carry it out].' The Prophet commanded them three times, and none stood up. He went then to his wife Umm Salamah and told her what he faced from the men. She said: 'O Prophet of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – if you will, go out and do not utter a word to any of them until [after] you have sacrificed your camels and called your barber and he has shaved your head.'

The advice was, in essence, to act decisively and the men would follow, even if reluctantly. This is indeed what happened.¹

THE WOMEN'S AUTHORITY ESTABLISHED BY THEIR OWN ACTIONS

The affirmation that authority in Islam derives from Qur'ān and *Sunnah* is what distinguishes believers from unbelievers in their faith, their deeds and their style of life. Particularly in the first years, the consequences of that affirmation were opprobrium, persecution, torture and, for some, death. Sons were separated from fathers, husbands from wives, brothers from brothers, and all were excluded to some degree from the system of tribal allegiances and protections. Since women were called to and entered the faith individually, they too faced and suffered the very same separations and vulnerability, the same aloneness, and, perhaps, being women, suffered more acutely. A well-known case is Fāṭimah, the sister of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the future caliph, then one of Islam's most assiduous (and being 'Umar, most competent) detractors and persecutors. He struck her violently when he found her reciting the Qur'ān in secret, but then her steadfast dignity in answer to his ill-temper led to his embracing the religion he had wanted to destroy.

Many examples will come in the chapters ahead of the women's diligence in seeking knowledge of the religion, then recording, transmitting and implementing it. So too examples will come of their dedication to self-discipline, not for its own sake, but in order the better to embody Islam in their whole environment and instil it in the hearts of their students. The best of the believing women were no less devoted to supererogatory remembrances and prayer than the best of the believing men. They too wanted to attend the mosque for the night prayer, and they were to be permitted: Sālim ibn 'Abdillāh narrates from his father 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar that the Prophet said: 'When your women ask your permission to go to the

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Shurūt*, bāb *al-shurūt fi-l-jihād*.

mosque in the night, give them permission.’¹ The women, no less than the men, strove to memorize the Qur’ān, to have it by heart and in the heart; and again, they too took note of the look and manner of the Prophet in all that he did, and committed to memory what they could of his sayings, telling one another what they had witnessed on occasions that some had missed but others not. Details will come in the course of the book.

After the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah, the tide turned, to the extent that God willed, in favour of the Muslims, and against their enemies among the idolaters and the People of the Book. Makkah was conquered without bloodshed and past enemies forgiven as they gave allegiance to the Prophet and to Islam. At the time of the death of the Prophet, when Revelation ceased, all the tribes of the Arab peninsula had embraced Islam, some politically, some in a better way. The believers needed to and did take stock of the turning-points in the formative years of this religion. To a limited extent, the notion was established of seniority in Islam, of commitment to it when this was a trial, and commitment after that. At most of the critical moments women were present. Women were among those who sought refuge in Abyssinia in the first or minor *hijrah*; among the Muslims of Yathrib (later called Madinah) who gave the second ‘Pledge of ‘Aqaba’ before the great Hijrah itself. Again, women were witnesses of the time when, by divine command, the orientation of the Muslims was turned about, from Jerusalem to Makkah. Before the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah was agreed, and it seemed a battle would be imposed upon them, the Prophet, asked the Muslims (they were gathered by a tree), to re-affirm their allegiance to him. So decisive was this show of commitment, that ‘the allegiance of the tree’ is mentioned in the Qur’ān itself. Women took part in this also.

We can get a sense of the historical weight that some of the Companions carried from a couple of biographical notices. Ibn

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāḥ*, bāb *khurūj al-nisā’ ilā l-masjid bi-l-layl wa-l-ghalas*.

‘Abd al-Barr says in his account of Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh:¹ ‘She is a Companion of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – and she has narrated his ḥadīth. And the people of Madinah have narrated ḥadīth from her. Ahmad ibn Zuhayr says: I heard my father saying: Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh is from those women who did allegiance under the tree.’ Similarly, of Salmā bint Qays ibn ‘Amr from the clan of ‘Adī ibn al-Najjār, whose *kunyah* is Umm al-Mundhir, a sister of Salīṭ ibn Qays who was one of those present at the battle of Badr, Abū Nu‘aym says: ‘She was one of the maternal aunts of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*. Some say: She was a paternal aunt of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*. She prayed in the direction of both *qiblahs* and she was among those women who did allegiance with the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*.’²

The single most important event was the Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah. It tested the will of the believers to quit their past bonds, to apply the faith in their hearts to the building of a way of life, a social order. That is why, later, it was recognized as the beginning of the Islamic era. Many women passed this test, some going with husbands and family, some alone, without protection. Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Uqbah was from a house well-known for unbelief and enmity to the Prophet. She did the Hijrah by herself. Her brothers al-Walīd and ‘Umārah tracked her until they reached Madinah the day after she did, and demanded that she be handed over to them. Umm Kulthūm said: ‘O Messenger of God, I am a woman, and you know how frail women are; if you return me to the unbelievers, they will put me on trial for my religion, and I will not be able to stand firm.’³ Then the famous verses of *al-Mumtaḥanah* were sent down (60. 10–13). The first of them begins: *O believers! When believing women come to you as fugitives, examine them. God knows better about their faith. Then if you know them for true believers, do not send them back to the unbe-*

¹ IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Isti‘āb*, ii. 731.

² ABŪ NU‘AYM AL-AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 248. ³ IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 230.

lievers. They are not lawful for the unbelievers and the unbelievers are not lawful for them.

I do not know of another religious tradition in which women were so central, so present, so active in its formative history. It follows that they were recognized as 'senior' in a social order in which authority was explicitly based upon commitment to and knowledge of the religion. It cannot then be a surprise that a woman had the authority to continue to narrate a ḥadīth that others did not recognize as one that should be acted upon – the case of the Companion Fāṭimah bint Qays; or that a woman could challenge the decision of a court and the decision be overturned because the ḥadīth she had reported was decisive and clear – the case of the Successor, 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān. As a final point while reflecting on what authority women had and should have in Islam, we might remember that, after the Prophet himself, the first person to hear the first words revealed from the Book, was his wife Khadijah, who believed in him; and the first *mushaf* or collection of leaves on which the Qur'ān was secured in writing (that is, outside the hearts of the believers) was entrusted to the safe-keeping of his wife, Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar.¹

Before I turn to an exposition of how women acquired and exercised their role as *muḥaddithāt*, I should perhaps note that ḥadīth is only one, though undoubtedly the most important, sphere of scholarly effort in which Muslim women excelled. This is not the place to report their varied contributions to *tajwīd* and *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, grammar and lexicography, poetry and other literary composition, theology, logic, philosophy, history and biography, medicine, the arts of the book and calligraphy, and many of the crafts that we recognize and admire as Islamic. However, I have provided brief notes with references, perhaps of interest to readers who want to follow them up, in an informal article available on line.²

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, bāb, *jam' al-Qur'ān*.

² www.interfacepublications.com/images/pdf/ AKRAM_Article2.pdf

Chapter 1

The legal conditions for narrating ḥadīth

There is no difference between men and women as regards the legal conditions for receiving and transmitting ḥadīth. If some people have a doubt about this it is because they muddle the conditions that apply to giving testimony in a legal suit with those that apply to passing on reports. While there are clear similarities between the two, there are also important differences that jurists have recognized.

A Prophetic ḥadīth is a text which, it is claimed, includes words that the Prophet uttered or that record his unspoken response to some action or event that he witnessed. The qualifications of the person transmitting such a text are the same as those that apply to the reception and transmission of reports generally, namely truthfulness and integrity, a competent and accurate memory, and being free of prejudice or compulsion of any sort that might be presumed to distort the reporting. In respect of general qualifications like that there can be no difference between men and women. Unfortunately, people confound reporting with giving testimony; then, having wholly misunderstood the quite particular conditions under which the testimony of two women is accorded the same weight as the testimony of one man, make the false inference that women's reporting of ḥadīth might (or even must) be considered weaker than that of men. It is necessary therefore to explain the particular conditions of testimony (*shahādah*), and the differences between that and reporting or narration (*riwāyah*).

TESTIMONY AND NARRATION

Many people misunderstand the meaning of God's saying:

O believers, when you make one another liable (tadāyantum), then put it in writing. And let a scribe write [it] between you justly (bi-l-ʿadl) [...]. And call to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if two men are not [to hand], then a man and two women from those you accept as witnesses, so that if one of the two errs [in what she remembers], then one of the two may remind (tudhakkira) the other. (al-Baqarah, 2. 282)

What is meant by a liability (*dayn*) is not a bare lending (*qard*), but an arrangement whereby one party accepts an obligation to the other that must be discharged in a certain way. Often, such dealings are done in an idiom that people familiar with them become fluent in, but which outsiders do not necessarily understand fully or accurately because, between people familiar with a thing, much can be left implicit. The idiom varies between nations and regions, even between different markets in the same country. For example, how people transact business in a modern stock exchange would be quite difficult for me to follow because I am unfamiliar with it – it may even be incomprehensible. It follows that, for transactions like that,¹ I am unlikely to be considered among ‘those you accept as witnesses’. That kind of relative disability is what is meant, and what is understood in Islamic law, by the command to get, if two men are not available, one man and two women to witness a transaction that entails a liability. There is not, in Islamic law, a general preference for the testimony of men over that of women, but there is, following the command of the Qurʾān, such a preference in the particular circumstances where men are more familiar with the

¹ Shaykh Saʿīd Ramaḍān AL-BŪTĪ reports on a visit to the New York stock exchange: ‘As I was looking at the crowd, and thinking about the great noise and hectic commotion, I was curious to find any woman busy in what the men were busy in. I could not see even one woman.’ (*al-Marʾah bayna tughyān al-niẓām al-gharbī wa laṭāʾif al-tashrīʿ al-rabbānī*, 149).

idiom of the matter than women. We can be quite sure of this because the same principle applies the other way – there are particular circumstances in which the testimony of women is preferred to that of men.

The qualities of ‘those you accept as witnesses’ are of two kinds. Firstly, the reputation of the witness for (i) *‘adālah* (i.e. integrity, probity), together with an absence of any cause of bias (like enmity against one party, or family relationship with the other party); and (ii) *ḍabt* (‘strong grasp’, i.e. a sound and reliable memory). Secondly, the reputation of the witness for familiarity with and understanding of the matter about which the testimony is to be taken.

The testimony of one whose *‘adālah* is defective, or the soundness of whose memory is doubtful, is not acceptable, whether the witness is a man or woman. Similarly, a testimony against an enemy, or on behalf of a relative, is not acceptable, whether the witness is a man or a woman. If those conditions are met, the witness must then be known to have some actual contact with the kind of matter about which the testimony is being taken; this is considered essential to safe testimony. If a fair degree of such contact is not established, then the testimony of that witness will be doubted, whether the witness is a man or a woman. If people differ in their contact with the kind of matter for which they are witnessing, then preference goes to those with greater experience in it.

Evidently, in matters related to feeding, care and upbringing of children, and lineage and what is like that, the testimony of women is better informed than that of men. It is narrated from Imām ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bī (d. ca. 100) that he said: ‘There are certain testimonies where only the testimony of women is allowed.’¹ As for financial matters and business issues, and the disputes and claims that rise in them, both men and women have contact with them; but men’s involvement with these issues is more than women’s. If we consider the question with an eye to

¹ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH (d. 751), *al-Turuq al-ḥukmiyyah*, 152.

the everyday reality of the norms that prevail in most societies most of the time, and with the practical need to prevent and resolve disputes between people, then the Qur'ānic ruling will be understood to reflect social reality wisely and fairly. The eligibility of women to give legal testimony is clearly affirmed; requiring two women to testify in lieu of one man applies in relation to trans-actions women do not normally engage in, the idioms of which they would need to make an exceptional effort to understand. In most situations, the weight of testimony is not related to the witness being a man or woman; and in some, the woman's testimony is preferred over a man's. That is the known practice of, among others, the third and fourth caliphs, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, of renowned Companions like 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās (d. 68) and 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar (d. 73), and, from the generations after them, of widely followed scholars such as Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110), Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124), Sufyān al-Thawrī (d. 161), and Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150) and his students. All of them hold that the testimony of a single woman is enough in matters that normally concern women more than they do men.¹

The difference between testimony and narration

Testimony is a kind of report that can result in establishing a definite liability for one or more particular individuals. Narration (*riwāyah*), by contrast, is a report of information that is not the basis of a definite, particular liability. Abū l-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474) says: "The door of testimony is narrower; that is why being male and being free are considered in it."²

Imām al-Qarāfī (d. 684) says in his book *al-Furūq* ('the Distinctions'):

I have begun with this distinction between these two fundamentals (*qā'idah*), since for eight years I had been searching to get hold of [the distinction], and was unable to do so. And I kept asking the scholars what the difference between the two is, and what the real meaning of

¹ See *ibid.*, 145–55; AL-BŪTĪ, *al-Mar'ah*, 147–53. ² Abū l-Walīd AL-BĀJĪ (d. 474), *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, i. 364.

each of them is, since both are a kind of reporting. [So it continued] until I studied *Sharḥ al-Burhān* of al-Māzarī [d. 536, who writes]: ‘Testimony and narration are both reports; except if the report belongs to a general matter, not related to a specific individual, then it is a narration, like his saying – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – ‘Actions go with [are valued by] the intentions’. [...] On the other hand, if a truthful person confirms to the judge that this individual owes to that individual one dinar, then this is binding to a definite [thing], not going beyond [the concerned parties] to anyone else. That is sheer testimony, while the former is sheer narration.’¹

The commentator on *Musallam al-thubūt* observes:

The report of a reliable pious woman will be accepted without any endorsement by a man, in contrast to testimony, because the condition of being male has come with regard to testimony by the text [of the Qur’ān]. [...] This acceptance of the report narrated by a woman alone is in line with [the practice of] the Companions, may God be pleased with them, and they are enough to be followed. They accepted the report of Barīrah even before her emancipation, as they accepted the report of *umm al-mu’minīn*² ‘Ā’ishah al-Ṣiddīqah, the report of *umm al-mu’minīn* Umm Salamah, and of others.’³

Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463), a famed authority on the principles of ḥadīth, explicitly confirms that point:

There is no dispute about the obligatoriness of accepting the report of those in whom are gathered all the qualities (*ṣifāt*) required in a witness of the *ḥuqūq* [rights of one party on another] – like being Muslim, adult, of sound mind, accurate memory, truthfulness, honesty, piety, etc. So too there is no dispute [about] the same obligatoriness [of the conditions] for narrator and witness – sound mind, awareness and memory [etc.]. Where narrator and witness differ from each other is in the obligatoriness of the witness being a free person, not parent or

¹ AL-QARĀFĪ, *K. al-Furūq*, i. 74–76. ²Lit. ‘mother of the believers’, an honorific title exclusive to the wives of the Prophet. ³Mullā ‘Abd al-‘Alī AL-ANṢĀRĪ (d. 1225), *Fawātiḥ al-raḥamūt* (his commentary on *Musallam al-thubūt* of Muḥibullāh ibn ‘Abd al-Shakūr [d. 1119], appended to al-Ghazālī’s *al-Mustasfā*), i. 144.

descendant [of any party regarding whom the testimony is offered], not having any relation that leads to suspicion, not a close friend, and being a male in some types of testimony, and being two in some types of testimony, and being four in some others. And all that is not considered in the narrator. For we accept the report [narrated by] a slave, a woman and a friend, etc.’¹

THE LAWFULNESS OF WOMEN RECEIVING AND NARRATING ḤADĪTH

The scholars are agreed that there is no difference between men and women in any type of narration, and that the two are alike in the right (and duty) to receive, hold and convey ḥadīth. The proofs for this are overwhelming and go back to the very first occasion that Islam was preached in public. We cannot be surprised by this, given that the study of ḥadīth is not an idle or leisure pursuit, but a means to understand the guidance of the Qur’ān and then implement it in personal life and in society. The lawfulness of receiving and transmitting ḥadīth is based on the duty of all Muslims to know their religion (*dīn*) and put it into practice: neither men nor women are exempted or excluded from this duty.

The first call to Islam is reported by Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab (d. ca. 90) and Abū Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 94) from Abū Hurayrah (d. 57), who said:

When God sent down this verse [*al-Shu‘arā*, 26. 214], ‘And warn your close kin’, then the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – stood up and said: O people of Quraysh! Look to yourselves, I shall not avail you in anything against God. O children of ‘Abd Munāf! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O ‘Abbās, son of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib! I shall not avail you in anything against God. O Ṣafīyyah [aunt of God’s Messenger]! I shall not avail you in anything against

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 94. Here he is quoting, through Muḥammad ibn ‘Ubaydillāh al-MĀLIKĪ, the opinion of the qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib.

God. O Fāṭimah, daughter of Muḥammad! Ask me whatever you like of my wealth, but I cannot avail you in anything against God.¹

The Prophet did not exclude the women from among the kindred he was commanded to warn first. Rather, he mentioned one man by name individually (his uncle), and two women by name individually (his aunt and daughter). It is also appropriate to recall that the very first person to hear and answer the call to Islam was the Prophet's wife, Khadījah. She strengthened his heart to carry the responsibility that God had laid upon him, and assured him of God's favour when he was anxious that he might prove unworthy and then be forsaken. It was she who led him to a learned relative of hers (a Christian monk), who also confirmed him to be the promised and chosen Messenger.

It is widely accepted that the rules of the disciplines that make up the science of ḥadīth did not begin to be formally written down until the end of the second century AH and after. Of course, the rules were not invented then; rather, scholars expressed in a systematic way what had long been established as good or best practice. This is analogous to how native users of a language know whether a phrase or sentence is correct or not; then, a quite different expertise is needed to work out the rules (the grammar) that native users are applying when they say that a particular usage is correct or incorrect.

We must affirm that, neither in the period of formally described and prescribed rules of the science of ḥadīth, nor in the generations of practice from which those rules derive, is a ḥadīth's being reported by a man a condition of its acceptability or its being reported by a woman a condition for its rejection. The Mu'tazilah, a sect of rationalists in the early period, were the strictest in their rules: they would not consider a ḥadīth as sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*) unless it came from two independent narrators in every generation going back to the original speaker of the text being reported. However, not even the Mu'tazilis required that the two narrators in each generation had to be male. In mainstream

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tafsīr*, bāb *wa-andhir 'ashīrata-ka l-aqrabīn*.

Islam, one of the greatest experts on the principles of the science (*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*) is Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643). He defines a ḥadīth as sound if it goes back to the Prophet through a solid, well-connected chain of narrators, each characterized as *‘adl* and *ḍābiṭ* (just and truthful, with a strong memory). He defines as *shādhah* (anomalous or aberrant) any report whose meaning does not fit with or corroborate other reports, of similar or related subject-matter, which are already established as sound. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ gives no weight whatever to whether a report was narrated by a male or female.¹

Among specialists in the field what weighed most heavily in discussions about the soundness of particular ḥadīths, were the personal qualities of the narrators, male and female alike, and how well the links between the individuals in the chains of narration (*isnād*) could be verified. Naturally, some chains were preferred over others, and among the preferred those most appreciated on account of their reliability were referred to as ‘golden chains’. Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn (d. 233) said: ‘Ubaydullāh ibn ‘Umar from Qāsim from ‘Ā’ishah is a solid gold chain of narration.’² Several chains that begin with ‘Ā’ishah are consistently described as among the best. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports

¹See IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 15, 26–27. Similar arguments can be found in other of the great specialists in ḥadīth sciences. See, for example: AL-NAWAWĪ (d. 676), *al-Taqrīb* with its commentary *al-Tadrīb*, i. 300–01. IBN RUSHAYQ AL-MĀLIKĪ (d. 632) discusses the acceptability of reports originating in a single narrator; among his examples of accepted narrators, the names of three women Companions head the list (*Lubāb al-maḥṣūl fī ‘ilm al-uṣūl*, i. 356): ‘They [the Companions and their successors] relied on the narration of a single person, like the narration of ‘Ā’ishah, Ḥafṣah, Umm Salamah, Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ‘Abbās, Ibn ‘Umar, Abū Bakr, ‘Uthmān and countless other people.’ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ discusses and illustrates at considerable length the qualities looked for in narrators: *al-Kifāyah*, 16–17, 52–77; he goes on to note (p. 84) that ‘The scholars of the early generations accepted whatever has been narrated by women.’ ²AL-ḤĀKIM, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 69, reporting from Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Salmān the jurist, from Ja‘far ibn Abī ‘Uthmān al-Ṭayālīsī, from Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn.

that Wākī^c ibn al-Jarrāh (d. 197) was once asked to indicate his preference among three of them: (1) Hishām ibn ‘Urwah from his father ‘Urwah from ‘Ā’ishah; (2) Aflāh ibn Ḥumayd from al-Qāsim from ‘Ā’ishah; (3) Sufyān from Manṣūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswad from ‘Ā’ishah. He said: ‘We do not consider anyone equal to the people of our city [Kufah]. Sufyān from Manṣūr from Ibrāhīm from al-Aswad from ‘Ā’ishah is more beloved to me.’ His own reason for this choice is that the narrators were based in Kufah and so he would have first-hand assurance of their quality. Also, more particularly, al-Aswad was famous for being exactingly meticulous about wording; for example, he reports from ‘Ā’ishah that

God’s Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – when he prayed in the night would come to his wife, then he would *lie down*. She did not say ‘then he would sleep’. When the *mu’adhdhin* called [to prayer] he would *jump up*. She did not say, ‘he would stand’. Then he would *pour [water] over himself*. She did not say ‘he would bathe’.¹

The experts have also praised Umm Salamah for the soundness and strength of the chains of narration from her. Al-Ḥākim reports that Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn and ‘Alī ibn al-Madinī (d. 234) gathered with a group of experts of ḥadīth and discussed the best of all good chains. ‘One of them said: The best is Shu‘bah from Qatādah from Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab from Āmir the brother of Umm Salamah from Umm Salamah.’²

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY OF ḤADĪTHS NARRATED BY WOMEN

As we have seen, the soundness of a ḥadīth was not in the least affected by whether a man narrated it or a woman. The importance of the question of the soundness of ḥadīths rests on the

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 174. However, Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd al-Dārimī (d. 253), following his teachers, preferred the first of these chains (AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Jāmi‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi‘*, ii. 299). ² AL-ḤĀKIM, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 68.

tendency of the Prophet's precepts and practice to become the foundation of legal rulings and social norms. On this question also, of the public authority of ḥadīths, the great imāms of the science, make no distinction on the basis of the narrator being a man or woman. Imām al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204, as reported by Rabi' ibn Sulaymān) says:

Someone asked me: Define for me the least by which a proof will be affirmed on the scholars so the individual report can be proven over them. I said: The report of a single person from a single person until it reaches the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – or someone after him [e.g. a Companion]. The report of single [narrators] will not be proof until it gathers some things: that the narrator is reliable in his religion, well-known for truthfulness in his speech, [that] he [is one who] understands what he narrates, [that] he knows what can change the meaning of the ḥadīth, or is among those who transmit the ḥadīth with its exact wording just as he heard it and does not transmit the meaning only. For if he narrates the meaning only and he is not aware of what changes the meaning, he will not know perhaps [but that] he may change lawful to unlawful. But if he narrates with exact wording then there will be no fear of [his unknowingly] changing the meaning. He should know his ḥadīth by heart if he is narrating [it] from memory. And he should preserve his writings well if he is narrating from writing [in notes or a book]. And if he shares ḥadīth [in common] with [others] who are known for being accurate, his ḥadīth should corroborate their ḥadīth. He should not be a *muddallis* – [i.e.] narrating from those whom he has [really] met what he has not [really] heard from them – and he should not be [one who ventures to go around] narrating from the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – what goes against the ḥadīth of people [with an established reputation as] reliable.¹

We can illustrate the point with some examples which show that women's ḥadīths were accepted (or not) as the basis of legal rulings, following the normal methods, and not because the narrators happened to be women.

Imām Mālik (d. 179) narrates from Sa'd ibn Ishāq ibn Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah, from his paternal aunt Zaynab bint Ka'b ibn 'Ujrah

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 23–24.

that Furayḥah bint Mālik ibn Sīnān, sister of Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, told her that she came to God's Messenger for permission to return to her parents' family home in the quarter of Banū Khudrah. She explained that her husband had gone out in search of his slaves who had run away, until they reached the side of Qadūm, where he caught up with them and they killed him:

So I asked God's Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – to go to my family, because my husband did not leave for me any residence that he owned, and no [means with which to defray my] expenses. God's Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – said: Yes. She said: I moved away until when I was [still] in the room or in the Mosque he called me [back] or asked someone to call me [back]. I came back. He asked: What did you say? I repeated to him the story of my husband's murder. Then the Prophet said: Stay in your house until the waiting period (*ʿiddah*) passes.

She said: I stayed there for the whole waiting period, four months and ten days.

She says: When ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān was [the caliph] he called me and asked me about that. I told him. Then he followed it and judged accordingly.¹

ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān, one of the four rightly-guided caliphs, ruled at a time when there were many male Companions. Yet he sought knowledge from a woman, she informed him and he judged accordingly. Had the report of a woman not been considered sufficient as a proof on which to base a ruling, he would not and could not have judged according to it. That she was a woman was not considered relevant. Similarly when a report was rejected as the basis for a ruling, the narrator's being a woman was not a relevant factor. Imām al-Shawkānī (d. 1255) says: 'It has not been narrated from any scholar that he rejected the report of a woman on the ground of her being female. There are plenty of *sunnaḥs* accepted by the *ummah* and they are [based on] the narration of a single female Companion. No-one

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD (d. 275), *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *fī l-mutwaffā ʿan-hā tantaqil*.

² AL-SHAWKĀNĪ, *Nayl al-awṭār*, viii. 22.

who has acquired a bit of knowledge of the *Sunnah* can deny this.²

This is well exemplified in the case of the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī reports that ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb would not act on her report ‘though she was a Muslim and on the straight path because her report was opposed to the Qur’ān’. ‘Umar said: We are not to leave the Book of our Lord and *Sunnah* of our Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – for the word of a woman [when] we do not know [for certain] whether she preserved [the matter fully] or not.’¹ Now ‘Umar refused to give a ruling on the basis of Fāṭimah’s ḥadīth for the good reason that it contradicted the Qur’ān. Even so, though he (and others) might have wished that she would stop narrating this ḥadīth, he did not try to prevent her from doing so. What happened with this ḥadīth illustrates the respect accorded to women in the society of that time, the authority they enjoyed, and strong belief in the principle that neither men or women could be prevented from acquiring and transmitting their knowledge and understanding of the religion – not even if someone of the stature of ‘Umar was opposed. So, despite ‘Umar’s refusal to act on it and, more importantly, despite the very strong argument against it (i.e. its apparent opposition to the Qur’ān), people continued to record it in their books, and to discuss it.²

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 83. See also AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *mā jā’a fī l-muṭallaqah thalāthan lā suknā la-hā wa-lā nafaqah* ‘[The famous Kufan jurist Mughīrah] says: I mentioned the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah to Ibrāhīm al-Nakha‘ī, who then said that ‘Umar said: We will not leave the Book of God and the *Sunnah* of our Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – for the ḥadīth of a woman, [about which] we do not know if she remembered or forgot [something related to it].’

² Among those who have included Fāṭimah’s ḥadīth in their books are: MĀLIK, *Muwattā*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *mā jā’a fī nafaqat al-muṭallaqah*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *al-muṭallaqah thalāthan lā nafaqah la-hā*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *fī nafaqat al-mabtūtah*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *mā jā’a fī an lā yakbatuba al-rajul ‘alā khitbah akhī-hi*; bāb *al-rukhsah fī kburij al-mabtūtah min bayti-hā fī ‘iddati-hā*, bāb *nafaqat al-bā’inah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *al-muṭallaqah thalāthan hal la-hā suknā wa-*

Indeed, respect for the ḥadīth was such that, once accepted as *ṣaḥīḥ* by the normal conventions, some scholars and jurists felt obliged to reconcile it somehow with the Qurʾān.

The ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays

The meaning of Fāṭimah's ḥadīth is that a divorced woman has no right of accommodation and living expenses from her former husband during the *ʿiddah*, the waiting period before the end of which she cannot re-marry. Fāṭimah bint Qays reports that her husband Abū ʿAmr ibn Ḥaṣṣ divorced her finally while away from home; he sent his agent to her with some barley to provide her expenses. She did not like this. He then said: 'By God you do not have any right upon us.' She came to God's Messenger, and recounted the matter to him. 'The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam* – said: Your expenses are not [an obligation] on him.'

ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Zayd ibn Thābit, ʿĀʾishah and other jurists among the Companions held that a divorced woman has right of accommodation and expenses, whether the divorce is final or provisional, and whether she is pregnant or not. This is the view also of later scholars and jurists – Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfah and his students, and the rest of the people of Kufah. Their view is based on the following verses of the Qurʾān (*al-Ṭalāq*, 65. 1, 6):

O Prophet! When you [men] divorce women, divorce them for their ʿiddah, and count their ʿiddah [accurately] and be wary of God, your Lord. Do not force them from their homes, nor should they leave [of their own accord], except in case of blatant indecency (fāḥishah). And those are the bounds of God. [...] You [the one divorcing his wife] do not know – it may be that God will later bring about some new affair [i.e. some reconciliation or eventual re-marriage]. [...] Lodge them [divorced wives] where you dwell, according to your means, and do not be hurtful to

nafaqah; IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, *Musnad al-nisāʾ*; IBN ABĪ SHAYBAH, *Muṣannaf*, *Ṭalāq*, *bāb man qāla idhā ṭallaqa-ha thalāthan laysa la-hā nafaqah*; Saʿīd ibn Mansūr, *Sunan*, *bāb mā jāʾa fī l-munākhaḥ*; AL-ṬAḤĀWĪ, in *Sharḥ Maʿānī al-āthār*, iii. 64–73; and many others with different chains of narrations.

them so that you constrain them [forcing them to leave]. And if they are pregnant, then spend on them till they deliver their burdens. Then if they breast-feed the children for you, give them their due payment, and consult each other in the normal way (*bi-l-ma'rūf*). [...]

– with further support from the ḥadīth mentioned earlier of Furayḥah bint Mālik, in which she is required to remain in her former husband's home during her *ʿiddah*.

Some Companions criticized Fāṭimah for narrating the ḥadīth. ʿĀ'ishah did so,¹ and explained that the ruling for Fāṭimah was because of some danger for her in staying at her ex-husband's home, with her in-laws.² Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab says: 'Fāṭimah was moved from her house because of her quarrelling with her in-laws.'³ But she continued narrating the ḥadīth, which left an impact on later jurisprudence. Some jurists tried to make it fit with the Qur'ān. They said that the verse of the Qur'ān is referring to a woman divorced provisionally, while Fāṭimah's ḥadīth is about a woman divorced finally. That is the opinion of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, ʿAṭā ibn Abī Rabāḥ, Āmir al-Shaʿbī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh.⁴ Others held that the divorcee has the right of accommodation by the Qur'ānic verse, but by Fāṭimah's ḥadīth not the right of maintenance. That is the opinion of Mālik ibn Anas, Layth ibn Saʿd and al-Shāfiʿī. Other jurists derived other, different rulings from the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah. For a summary and more references see Table 1.

¹ al-Qāsim narrated from ʿĀ'ishah: 'What is it with Fāṭimah? Does she not fear God in narrating this ḥadīth?' AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *man ankara dhālika ʿalā Fāṭimah*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *al-muṭallaqah thalāthan lā nafaqah la-hā*. See also AL-TAḤĀWĪ, *Sharḥ Maʿānī al-āthār*, iii. 68. ² ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *man ankara dhālika ʿalā Fāṭimah*. ³ *Ibid*, AL-BAYHAQĪ, *Sunan*, *Nafaqāt*, bāb *al-mabtūtah lā nafaqah la-hā*. ⁴ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *mā jāʿa fī l-muṭallaqah thalāthan lā suknā la-hā wa-lā nafaqah*. Hushaym narrates from Ismāʿīl ibn Abī Khālid (*ʿAwn al-maʿbūd* commenting on the ḥadīth in *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*) that Shaʿbī said about ʿUmar's saying he was uncertain whether Fāṭimah 'remembered or forgot' some bit of wording or of context relevant to understanding the matter: 'A woman of Quraysh, known for her intelligence and wisdom, will forget a verdict that goes against her [interests]?!'

hadith narrated by	compilations recorded in [b. = bab]	juristic positions	position held by	major works recording the controversy
ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUbayh ibn Masʿūd, Abū Salamah ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿAwfī, ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr, ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī, ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn ʿĀsim ibn Thābit, Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Rahmān ibn Thawbān, Abū Bakr ibn Abī l-Jahm ibn Ṣukhayr al-ʿAdawī, ʿAbd al-Ḥamid ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Abī ʿĀmir ibn al-Ḥafṣ, Tamīm, <i>maulā</i> of Fātimah; al-Bahī	al-Bukhārī, <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>qissat</i> Fātimah bint ʿĀwṣ; Muslim, <i>Ṣaḥīḥ</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>al-mutalliqah thalāthan la najfaqata laḥā</i> ; Abū Dāwūd, <i>Ṣunan</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>fi najfaqat al-mahṭab</i> al-Tirmidhī, <i>Jāmiʿ</i> , <i>Nikeh</i> , b. <i>mā jāʿa fi an lā yakṭibha al-rjāl ʿalā...</i> ; al-Nasaʿī, <i>Ṣunan</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>al-rakʿash fi kharīj al-mahṭab min bayṭhā fi ʿiddatihā</i> , b. <i>najfaqat al-baʿṭnah</i> ; Ibn Mājah, <i>Ṣunan</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>al-mutalliqah thalāthan hal la-hā sukenā wa najfaqah</i> ; al-Dārimī, <i>Ṣunan</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>fi l-mutalliqah thalāthan a-la-hā l-sukenā wa l-najfaqah am lā</i> ; Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal, <i>Musnad</i> , <i>musnad al-nisāʾ</i> ; Ibn Abī Shaybah, <i>Musannaf</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>man qala ribā talāqahā thalāthan laysa la-hā najfaqah</i> , b. <i>man rakeʿata fi l-mutalliqah an taʿadda fi ghyri bayṭ-hā</i> ; Saʿīd ibn Mansūr, <i>Ṣunan</i> , b. <i>mā jāʿa fi l-munākhaḥ</i> Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭahāwī, <i>Sharḥ Maʿāni al-ahkām</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>al-mutalliqah talāqan bāʿinan maḥḥā la-hā ʿalā qawṭhā fi ʿiddat-hā</i> ; Ibn Hibbān, <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>al-ʿiddah</i> ; al-Ḥakīm, <i>al-Mustadrak</i> , iv. 61–62; al-Dāraquṭnī, <i>Ṣunan</i> , <i>Talāq</i>	she has right of neither accom- modation nor expenses she has right of accom- modation but not of expenses she has right of both accom- modation and expenses	ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, Ḥasan al-Basrī (d. 110), ʿIkrimah, ʿAḥz̤ ibn Abī Rabāh (d. 114), ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī, Isḥāq ibn Rahawayh, Ahmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241)	Malik, <i>al-Muwattaʿ</i> , <i>Talāq</i> , b. <i>mā jāʿa fi najfaqat al-mutalliqah</i> al-Shāfiʿī, al-ʿUmm, <i>adwāb mutafarriqah fi al-nikāḥ wa-l-ṭalāq wa ghyri-himā</i> Ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191), <i>al-Mudawwanah</i> , <i>Talāq</i> al-sunnah, <i>najfaqat al-mutalliqah wa sukenā-hā</i> Ibn Ḥazm, <i>al-Muballāḥ</i> , <i>Talāq</i> al-Sarakhsī, <i>al-Mabṣūṭ</i> , <i>Nikeh</i> , b. <i>al-najfaqah fi talāq wa-l-ḥuqūq wa al-qawṭiyah</i> al-Kasānī, <i>Badaʾīʿ al-sanāʾīʿ</i> , iv. 448 al-Marghinānī, <i>al-Hidāyah</i> , <i>Talāq</i> Ibn Rushd, <i>Biṭāyah al-mujtahid</i> , b. <i>al-ʿiddah</i> al-Nawawī, <i>al-Majmūʿ Sharḥ al-mubḥabḥab</i> , xviii. 164 Ibn Qudāmah, <i>al-Mughnī</i> , <i>Talāq</i> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, <i>Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn</i> , <i>fatāwā fi najfaqat muʿtadab wa kawsar-hā</i> , <i>Zād al-Maʿād</i> , v. 522–42

Table 1. The right to disagree: different juristic responses to the ḥadīth of Fātimah bint Qays that an ex-husband is not obliged to provide expenses and accommodation for the divorced wife during the *ʿiddah* (waiting period)

Another example: a ḥadīth from ‘Ā’ishah

This second example concerns a legal effect of breast-feeding. A wet-nurse is prohibited in marriage to the one who has been breast-fed by her, just as his natural mother would be, which in turn means that the restrictions on how the two meet are relaxed. ‘Ā’ishah narrated that Sālim, the slave of Abū Ḥudhayfah, lived with him in his house. Abū Ḥudhayfah’s wife, the daughter of Suhayl came to the Prophet and said: ‘Sālim has attained manhood and he enters in our house and I feel that my husband is not at ease about this. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – said to her: Give your milk to [Sālim], then you will become unlawful for him and then Abū Ḥudhayfah will be at ease.’ The daughter of Suhayl, reports that she did so and that her husband was then at ease about his being in the house.¹

On the basis of this ḥadīth ‘Ā’ishah held that if a woman gave her milk to an adult, it would then be as if she had been his wet-nurse, with the legal effect as explained above. She was opposed by others among the Companions, including other wives of the Prophet, and by the imāms of the later generations – Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, al-Shāfi‘ī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and others – because of the Qur’ānic verse (*al-Baqarah*, 2. 233):

The mothers shall breast-feed their children for two whole years, [that is] for those [parents] who desire to complete the breast-feeding.

Those who opposed ‘Ā’ishah also relied on a number of ḥadīths. For example, the Prophet’s saying: ‘Breast-feeding is out of hunger.’² This means that only that is to be considered breast-feeding which satisfies hunger, namely in early infancy before the child turns to solid foods. When the child reaches the age when milk does not satisfy his hunger, then foster-mother relationship is not established with that child, and the

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Radā’*, bāb *radā’at al-kabīr*. ²AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *man qāla: lā rada’ah ba’da ḥawlayn*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Radā’*, bāb *inna-mā al-radā’ah min al-majā’ah*.

legal effects of that relationship do not apply.¹ Ibn Mas‘ūd has narrated something similar.² ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr has narrated from the Prophet: ‘There is no breast-feeding but what enters into the intestines.’³ Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir has narrated from Umm Salamah that the Prophet said: ‘Only that breast-feeding forbids [marriage] which becomes a part of the intestines and happens before the age of weaning.’⁴ After citing that ḥadīth, al-Tirmidhī says:

Most scholars from among the Companions of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – and others hold the opinion that breast-feeding only forbids [marriage] if it is within two years [after birth] and what is after the full two years it does not forbid anything.

Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Zam‘ah narrated that his mother Zaynab bint Abī Salamah told him that her mother Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – used to say: All wives of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – refused to allow anyone to enter upon them by that breast-feeding [which ‘Ā’ishah allowed] and they said to ‘Ā’ishah: That was a permission particular to the wife of Abū Ḥudhayfah, and no one can enter upon us by such breast-feeding and see us.⁷

Despite the opposition to it, ‘Ā’ishah continued to narrate the ḥadīth and be guided by it, and the jurists did not see any harm in citing it. Ibn Abī Mulaykah has reported that Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr told that ḥadīth of ‘Ā’ishah to him. He adds: ‘I endured one year or about one year not narrating this ḥadīth to anyone and I was afraid of [doing so]. Then I met Qāsim and I said to him: You narrated to me a ḥadīth which I could not [dare to] narrate to anyone. Qāsim said: What is that? I told him. He said: You can narrate it from me that ‘Ā’ishah narrated it to me.’⁸

¹See AL-BAGHAWĪ (d. 494) *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, v. 65. ²ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Nikāḥ*, bāb *fi raḍā‘at al-kabīr*. ³IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Nikāḥ*, bāb *lā raḍā‘ah ba‘da fiṣāl*. ⁴AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘, Raḍā‘*, bāb *mā dhukira anna l-raḍā‘ah lā tuḥarrim illā fi l-ṣighar dūn al-ḥawlayn*. ⁷MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Raḍā‘*, bāb *raḍā‘at al-kabīr*. ⁸*Ibid*.

Three important points can be drawn from the foregoing discussion: (1) In the time of the Companions the desire to understand and implement the *dīn* was stronger than anything else, before there was any established division by doctrine, sect or political faction. The people did not suffer from loyalties competing with loyalty to Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, and so they were able to differ without dividing, to disagree on particular matters without loss of mutual respect and solidarity.

(2) Where there was discussion of how to understand and implement ḥadīths, the weight given to someone's knowledge or understanding was not a function of the individual's being a man or woman. If a broad consensus accrued around one understanding rather than another, it was not on account of so-called 'patriarchal attitudes'. The historical evidence will not sustain the view that the learned Companions or their Successors or the jurists and scholars who were followed (i.e. imāms) after them interpreted the guidance of Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, consciously or unconsciously, to serve vested interests of political, economic or gender privilege.

(3) The material, on the basis of which decisions were taken and directions given about how to live by the guidance, was in the public domain: people were required to bring it and keep it in public. The seniority of some Companions, the positions of power some had risen to, the fact that some had been specially close to the Prophet by relationship of birth or marriage, did not enable them to prevent the circulation of material or of interpretations that they opposed. The greater authority some enjoyed was not mysterious or charismatic; it derived from strictly known and demonstrable qualities: breadth and depth of knowledge, intelligence and understanding, combined with firm belief, God-wariness and righteousness. From the examples given thus far, in the text or the notes, it should be clear that Muslim scholars took great pains to record as much as they could of this material, how it passed from whom to whom, who agreed with one interpretation or another, and who disagreed and why. In the next chapters we shall see how the women of the *ummah* were included in this scholarly activity.

Chapter 2

Women as seekers and students of ḥadīth

We have seen that the Law places no formal impediment in the way of women acquiring the knowledge to understand and practise Islam. Rather, it is a duty for them to do so, just as it is for the men. But a law, whether it permits or forbids, while it has educative force, does not suffice by itself to enable the intended outcome. Also needed, alongside the law, is a wider societal effort to establish an ethos that welcomes and enables what the law intends. In the first part of this chapter I review how women were urged, from the outset of Islam, to learn the religion, and how that example was sustained in the period that followed, by the caliphs and other rulers, by the ulema and the men and women who enjoyed authority. It was sustained also by the dedication of the women themselves to the task, to travelling in the path of knowledge, to overcoming shyness. In the second part I set out the ways in which women acquired the necessary skills to preserve ‘the knowledge’, by committing ḥadīth to memory, then to writing.

THE DISPOSITION TO TEACH WOMEN

The duty to teach

The Prophet’s primary role was not as law-giver or ruler but as a teacher of the *dīn* – law and rule were as means to that end:

He it is Who has sent among the unscriptured (ummiyyūn) a Messenger from among them, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Scripture (kitāb) and the Wisdom (ḥikmah). And before [that] they had certainly been in manifest error. (al-Jumū‘ah, 62. 2)

The duty of embodying Islam as a way of life entailed life-long sacrifice for the Messenger himself and for his household. The Qur'ān alludes delicately (*al-Aḥzāb*, 33. 28–29) to the occasion when, within that household, there was ill-feeling, perhaps reluctance to go on enduring hardship, perhaps desire for recompense in the form of present advantage or privilege. So 'the choice' was put to the wives of the Prophet – either him with hardship and the supreme recompense hereafter, or parting from him with some goods of this world. In the narration of Jābir, the Prophet first put 'the choice' to 'Ā'ishah, advising her not to decide hastily but to take counsel with her parent:

She said: Will I consult my parent about you, O Messenger of God? Rather, I choose God, His Messenger and the hereafter, and I ask you not to inform any of your wives about what I have said. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: No-one among them will ask me but I will tell her. God has not sent me as *mu'annit* [who makes it hard for people] or as *muta'annit* [who lets others fall into error]. Rather, He has sent me to teach [people] and to make [the straight way] easy [for them].¹

We do not know what 'Ā'ishah had in mind in asking what she did; but we do know his motive for refusing her because he states it himself – he was bound by his primary duty as teacher to communicate to people whatever would help them to choose the right path.

Educating the children

The first stage of teaching is the upbringing of children. An essential condition of doing that well is to respect and love the children, girls as well as boys. It required some effort to change attitudes that had become deeply ingrained. God's Messenger said: 'God has disliked three things from you: being disobedient to mothers, burying [infant] girls alive, and the habit of taking and not giving.'² 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, eminent Companion and son

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *bayān anna takhyīr imra'ati-hi lā yakūn ṭalāqan illā ba'd al-niyyah*. ²AL-ṬABARĀNĪ, cited in AL-HAYTHAMĪ (d. 807), *Majma' al-ḡawā'id*, viii. 270.

of the second caliph, heard a man wishing his daughters dead, perhaps because he was worried about the economic burden. Ibn 'Umar was angered and said: 'Is it you who provide their provision?'¹ 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir (d. ca. 60) narrates that the Messenger of God said: 'Do not be averse to daughters. For they are precious treasures that comfort your heart.'² 'Ā'ishah narrates that he said: 'Whoever is tested with anything of these girls – they will be his screen from the Fire.'³ Anas ibn Mālīk narrates that the Messenger said: 'Whoever brings up two girls until they become adult, he and I will come close to one other like this' and he brought his fingers together to indicate closeness.⁴ Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī (d. 63) narrates that he said: 'Whoever has three daughters or three sisters or two daughters or two sisters and then he is good company for them and is wary of God in regard to them, he will have paradise.'⁵ The Prophet's teaching was remembered by his community: Ṣālih ibn Aḥmad, son of the great *muḥaddith* and jurist said: 'Whenever my father Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal had a daughter born to him, he would say: The prophets, upon them be peace, were the fathers of daughters. And he would say: About the daughters there has come [in the ḥadīths] the reward that is known.'⁶

The *Sunnah* is particular about treating sons and daughters equally. Al-Bazzār (d. 292) has cited the ḥadīth from Anas ibn Mālīk that there was with the Prophet a man whose son came to him: the man kissed the boy and sat him on his lap. Then his daughter came and he sat her in front of him. 'God's Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – said to the man: Why did you not treat them equally?'⁷

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, i. 158. ² AL-HAYTHAMĪ, *Majma' al-ṣawā'id*, viii. 286. ³ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Zakāh*, bāb *ittaqū l-nār*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Birr*, bāb *faḍl al-iḥsān alā l-banāt*. ⁴ MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Birr*, bāb *faḍl al-iḥsān alā l-banāt*. ⁵ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Birr*, bāb *mā jā'a fī l-naḥaqah 'alā l-banāt wa-l-akḥawāt*. ⁶ Muḥammad Nūr ibn 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ SUWAYD, *Manhaj al-tarbiyah al-nabawiyah li-l-tifl*, 324. ⁷ AL-HAYTHAMĪ, *Majma' al-ṣawā'id*, viii. 286–87.

The Prophet emphasized the need to fix in the hearts of the children, from as early an age as possible, a love for the *dīn*. He himself did this by engaging with them, playing with them, and involving them in his practice of it. The ḥadīths that record his affection for Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, his grandsons, when they were infants, and how he would keep them by him even while doing the prayer, are widely known. Here it is fitting that we recall the ḥadīths that show the same care and concern for girls.

Khālid ibn Saʿīd narrates from his father, from Umm Khālid bint Khālid ibn Saʿīd, who had lived for a time in Abyssinia, that she said: 'I came to God's Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – with my father. I was wearing a yellow dress. The Messenger of God said: *Sanah, sanah*, which in the tongue of the Abyssinians meant, Nice, nice. She says: 'Then I started playing with the seal of prophethood on his shoulder. My father rebuked me [for that. But] the Messenger of God said: Let her be. Then he prayed for her dress to last a long time. It did last for a long time.'¹

Abū Qatādah (d. 54) narrates how they were sitting before the door of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam*, when he came out carrying his granddaughter, Umāmah bint Abī l-Āṣ ibn al-Rabīʿ, the daughter of his daughter Zaynab. She was then a little child. The Prophet led the prayer keeping her on his shoulder – he would set her on the ground when bowing, then put her back on his shoulder as he got up: 'He went on doing this until he finished his prayer.'²

The Prophet did not forbid women from bringing their children and nursing babies to the mosques. Rather, their being there was expected and he would shorten his prayer out of consideration for the children and for their mothers' need to attend them. Thābit al-Bunānī narrates from Anas ibn Mālik that he said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-*

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Adab*, bāb *man taraka ṣabīyyata ghayri-hi ḥattā talʿaba bi-hi aw qabbala-hā aw maṣaḥa-hā*. ² IBN SAʿD (d. 230), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 39.

sallam – would hear the cry of a child with his mother during the prayer. Then he would recite the light sūrah[s] – or [the narrator] said the short sūrah[s].¹ Qatādah (d. 118) narrated, also from Anas, that he said: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: I enter upon the prayer meaning to make it long then I hear the crying of a baby and I lighten the prayer for [the sake of] the child’s mother’s yearning [to attend to the baby].’¹

Keeping children on the Sunnah

Parents used to train their children from an early age to adhere to the *sunnahs* of the Prophet. Khālid ibn Dhakwān (*tābi‘ī*) narrated from Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh (d. ca. 70) that she said: ‘The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – sent his messenger on the morning of ‘Āshūrā to the houses of the Anṣār saying: Whoever started [the day] not fasting, he should complete the day [not fasting], and whoever started [the day] fasting he should fast. She says: Then after that we used to fast that day and make our children fast that day, and make woollen toys so when any of them cried for food, we would give him [the toys]; so they would be busy with them until the time of breaking the fast.’² Fasting on the day of ‘Āshūrā is not compulsory, but the believers were keen to encourage their children to grow in piety. As for fasting in Ramaḍān, children used to do it regularly. ‘Umar said to someone who was not fasting in Ramaḍān: ‘Woe to you! even our children are fasting.’²

The Prophet said: ‘That the father teaches good manners (*yu‘addib*) to his child is surely better for him than giving charity of a *ṣā‘* in the path of God.’³

The reason for disciplining children is to correct them, not to hurt. The aim, that the child acquire the authority to command him or herself to do what is right, cannot be realized if

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *amr al-a‘immah bi-takhfiḥ al-ṣalāh fī tamām*.

²AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Sawm*, bāb *sawm al-ṣibyān*. ³AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *al-Birr wa-l-ṣilāh*, bāb *mā jā’a fī adab al-walad*.

parents use words or blows in an uncontrolled way, to hurt the child or to relieve anger and frustration at being thwarted. The great jurist al-Kāsānī (d. 587) says: 'The child is to be rebuked (*ʿazzara*) to teach [him] manners, not to punish; because it is in the capacity of teaching manners [that it has been permitted]. Do you not see what is narrated from the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – that he said: Command your children to pray when they are seven, and strike them for that when they are ten.'

¹

Encouraging girls and women to attend gatherings

The Prophet commanded girls and adult women, even those in a state of impurity, to attend those occasions of public assembly where knowledge of the religion would be presented. He did not recognize as an excuse that some poor women did not have a *jilbāb* (loose over-garment) to put on when going out. Umm ʿAṭiyyah al-Anṣāriyyah narrates:

The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – commanded us to bring them out on [*ʿĪd*] *al-fitr* and [*ʿĪd*] *al-adḥā* – adult girls, adolescents, and those kept secluded (*ḥuṣṣaḍ dhawāt al-ḥudūr*). As for those in impurity, they were to leave the prayer but attend the good and the supplication of the Muslims. I said: O Messenger of God, if someone does not have *jilbāb*? He said: Then her sister will lend her *jilbāb* to her.²

ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, the Prophet's cousin, narrates that, the Prophet used to command his wives and daughters to go out to attend both ʿĪds.³ They already had ample opportunity to learn from him directly; the reason he did this was to establish

¹ AL-KĀSĀNĪ (d. 587), *Badāʾiʿ al-ṣanāʾiʿ*, vii. 63. ² AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥayḍ*, bāb *shubūḍ al-ḥāʾid al-ʿidayn wa daʿwat al-muslimīn*. AL-BAGHAWĪ says about this ḥadīth (*Sharḥ al-sunnah*, ii. 611): 'It holds evidence that a woman during her monthly period should not abandon remembrance of God, places of good, and assemblies of knowledge.' ³ IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Abwāb iqāmat al-ṣalah*, bāb *mā jāʾa fī ḥurūj al-nisāʾ fī l-ʿidayn*.

the *sunnah* by implementing it in his own household – that was his customary way of teaching his community.

The duty to answer the women's questions

It is obligatory for any teacher who follows the example of God's Messenger that he listen attentively to the questions put to him and answer them in a way that meets the questioner's need. Anas ibn Mālik narrates that a woman with some mental disability wanted to put some matter to the Prophet but did not want anyone else to know of it. Anas reports that the Prophet said to her: 'O mother of so-and-so, suggest some street that you like so that I can respond to your need there.' So he answered her question in a public space, yet privately.¹ Al-Nawawī (d. 676) comments:

This ḥadīth informs [us] of the humility of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – that he would stand even with a weak-minded woman to [hear and] answer her question and solve her problem in privacy. That [way that he demonstrated] is not the forbidden [kind of] privacy with a woman stranger because this was in a thoroughfare of the people where they could see him and her, but could not hear her speaking. For her question was about a matter such as could not be revealed.²

Generally both men and women attended the Prophet's teaching in the mosque and other places. That is why we have many ḥadīths which record, through the narration of both men and women, the same *sunnahs*. However, on the occasions when men were present, the women were shy to raise matters that concerned them particularly. For such matters, a few women were able to call upon him at his house. To satisfy those who were thus left out, he was asked to set aside a day specifically for them. Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī says: 'The women asked the Prophet

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fadā'il*, bāb *qurb al-nabī 'alay-hi l-salām min al-nās wa tabarruki-him bi-hi*. ²AL-NAWAWĪ, *Sharḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (commenting *in loco* on the ḥadīth cited in the preceding note). ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *ʿIlm*, bāb *hal yajʿalu li-l-nisā' yawman 'alā ḥidāh*.

– *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – to make a specific day for them. Then the Prophet promised them a day on which he met them and then preached to and instructed them.³

Sometimes the Prophet would teach using analogy so that the listener could grasp the reasoning supporting the ruling. For example, Ibn ‘Abbās has narrated that a woman from the tribe of Juḥaynah came to the Prophet and said:

My mother vowed to God to do ḥajj, but she was not able to do ḥajj before she died. Should I do ḥajj on her behalf? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: Yes. Consider, if your mother had a debt, would you not pay it back? So pay the debt to God. A debt to God deserves the most to be paid.¹

About certain matters, people are shy of being explicit. The Prophet would answer using delicate hints that an alert, intelligent listener could understand. It is narrated from ‘Ā’ishah that Asmā’ bint Shakal asked about the bathing at the end of the menstrual period. He said:

The woman should take water and leaves of the lote tree and clean nicely, then pour water over her head, rubbing vigorously so that she reaches to the roots of her hair. Then she should pour water over herself. Then she should take a piece of cloth perfumed with musk and clean with it. Asmā’ asked: How will she clean with it? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: *Subḥān al-lāh!*² You will clean with it. Then ‘Ā’ishah said to her in a subdued voice: Follow the traces of blood.³

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, abwāb al-iḥṣār wa jazā’ al-ṣayd*, bāb *al-ḥajj wa-l-nudbūr ‘an al-mayyit wa-l-rajul yaḥujju ‘an al-mar’ah*. ²This phrase (roughly ‘Glory be to God’) serves as a common exclamation to mark the moment when Muslims recognize a matter as being beyond their capacity to influence. ³AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayḍ*, bāb *dalk al-mar’ah nafsa-hā*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayḍ*, bāb *istibāb isti’māl al-mughtasilah min al-ḥayḍ firṣah min mask fī mawḍi‘ al-dam*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Ṭahārah*, bāb *al-ighṭisāl min al-mahīḍ*; AL-NASA’Ī, *Sunan*, bāb *dhikr al-‘amal fī ghasl al-mahīḍ*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Ṭahārah*, bāb *al-ḥā’id kayfa taghtasil*.

The practice of those who followed

With the ending of prophethood, the learned among the community, took up the duty of teaching 'the Book and the Wisdom' because obedience to God cannot be well established without knowledge. The scholars urged the rulers to specify days for the teaching of women on the basis of what has been narrated from Ibn Jurayj, from 'Aṭā' that Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh said: 'The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – stood up on the day of *Īd al-ḥiṭr* and did the prayer. He began with the prayer, then gave the *khutbah*. When he finished, he came down, then [came] to the women where, while leaning on the hand of Bilāl, he [preached to them and] reminded them.' Ibn Jurayj asked 'Aṭā': 'Do you think it is incumbent on the imām that he [preach to and] remind the women?' 'Aṭā' said: 'Surely it is incumbent on them. And why do not they do that?'¹ He meant that it is not something special for the Prophet.

Because of the concern among conscientious Muslims to follow the *Sunnah*, people generally concerned themselves to educate women in it. So the women carried and transmitted knowledge, as the men did, and among them were many who, being guided themselves, were able to guide others, to open the ways to good, and close the doors to evil. Knowledge is among the very best of the acts of obedience; the most learned scholar, Umm al-Dardā' (d. 81) said: 'I have sought worship in everything. I did not find anything more relieving to me than sitting with scholars and exchanging [knowledge] with them.'²

After explaining in detail what is incumbent on guardians regarding the education of dependants, Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737) said: 'The scholar should free himself to teach these commands (*ahkām*) to the elders and the young, male and female. God says [and then he cites the whole of the verse, cited above pp. 4–5 (*al-Aḥzāb*, 33. 35): *The muslim men and muslim women... God has prepared for them*

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Īdayn*, bāb *al-mashy wa-l-rukūb ilā l-Īd*... ² Abū 'Ubaydah MASHHŪR ibn Ḥasan Āl Salamān, *'Ināyat al-nisā' bi-l-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, 13.

forgiveness and a great reward]. The Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam*, said: The women are pairs of the men. So husband and wife and male and female slave are equal in respect of their good qualities. The people of the early generation (*salaf*) were firm on this path. You will find that their children and their male and female slaves in most of their matters share in all these virtues [listed in the verse].¹

The biographical sources are full of examples of women whose fathers took care to teach them ḥadīth and other subjects. The Companions and, after them, the Successors were most particular in this. Among the latter, for example, Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyab taught all his ḥadīths to his daughter; in the next generation, Mālīk ibn Anas taught his daughter the whole of his *Muwatta’*. Later still, Abū Ḥanīfah, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and indeed some scholars in every generation, attended with care to the education of their children. A few examples:

Under the care of her father, the qāḍī Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Kāmil ibn Khalaf ibn Shajarah al-Baghdādī (d. 350), student of the famous historian and Qur’ān commentator, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310), the *muḥaddithah* Amat al-Salām, Umm al-Faṭḥ (d. 390) heard ḥadīths from Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Baṣṭānī and Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Ḥumayd ibn al-Rabī‘ (both early 4th c.). Al-‘Atīqī (d. 441) confirms this and notes: ‘Her hearing ḥadīth is recorded in her father’s handwriting.’²

Shaykh al-Islām Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Maghribī al-Fāsī (d. 560), known as Ibn al-Ḥuṭay‘ah, taught his daughter the seven recitations of the Qur’ān, the *Ṣaḥīḥ*s of al-Bukhārī and Muslim and other books of ḥadīth. She wrote down a great number of ḥadīths and studied extensively with her father, yet it is recorded that somehow he never got to see her. When Shujā‘, one of the narrators was asked about this, he explained that it began by chance while she was a baby: he would be busy teaching until sunset by which time she would be asleep. This

¹ IBN AL-ḤĀJJ, *al-Madkhal*, ii. 215, cited in *ibid.*, 22. ² AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 444.

somehow carried on until she had grown up, married and gone to her own house. Imām al-Dhahabī comments on this severely: ‘There is no praise in something like this; rather the *Sunnah* is the opposite of it. For the master of mankind – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam* – used to carry his granddaughter Umāmah, while he did the prayer.’¹

Another example is what has come in the preface of *Kitāb al-Mu‘allimīn* of Ibn Saḥnūn (d. 256): ‘The pious qāḍī ‘Īsā ibn Miskīn used to teach his daughters and granddaughters. Qāḍī ‘Iyād [d. 544] says: ‘After the *‘aṣr* prayer he would call his two daughters and the daughters of his brother to teach them the Qur’ān and the knowledge. The same was done before him by Asad ibn al-Furāt, the conqueror of Sicily, with his daughter Asmā’ who attained a high degree in knowledge.’²

Some scholars ensured that their daughters’ interest in ḥadīth and other branches of knowledge would continue by marrying them to other scholars. For example Shaykh al-Qurrā’, Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Andalusī (d. 496) first taught his daughter himself, then took her to his teachers from whom she heard their ḥadīths directly. When she completed her education, he married her to one of his more knowledgeable students. Ibn al-Abbār (d. 658) says:

She narrated from her father a lot and she learnt from some of her father’s teachers. [...] And she is the one whose father married her to Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad, a youth who read [studied] with him. [This Aḥmad] was virtuous and poor, and [the Shaykh] was pleased with his manners and said to him once: Would you like that I marry my daughter to you? The young person became shy and mentioned to him an excuse that did not allow him to marry. The Shaykh married her to him, gave her *jibāz* [marriage portion] and took her to him.³

Imām ‘Alā’ al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 539), author of *Tuhfat al-fuqahā’* and other books, had a daughter famed for her beauty

¹AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubulā’*, xx. 347–48. ²Abū ‘Ubaydah MASHHŪR, *‘Ināyat al-nisā’*, 131. ³IBN AL-ABBĀR, *Takmilah ṣilat al-ṣilah*, 406.

and sought after by princes and the wealthy. Her father refused such offers because she was a scholar, one who had memorized his *Tuhfat al-fuqahā*¹. One particular student stayed with him until he became an expert in both the principles and practical details of the Law, and then wrote *Badā'i al-ṣanā'i*², a commentary on his shaykh's *Tuhfat al-fuqahā*³. The latter was so pleased with the work that he married his daughter to this student, accepting the commentary as dowry. The student, who became a very famous jurist in his own right, was al-Kāsānī.¹

The sources also record the scholars' attentiveness to the education of their wives. Ibn al-Ḥājj says: 'In our time there was Sīdī Abū Muḥammad. His wife read the whole Qur'ān with him and memorized it. Similarly she read with him the *Risālah* of Shaykh Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd al-Qayrawānī (d. 386) and half of the *Muwattā* of Imām Mālik.² Another example is the wife of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, Uns bint 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Aḥmad al-Karīmī al-Lakhamī. Ibn Ḥajar enabled her to hear the *Musal-sal bi-l-awwalīyyah* of his own shaykh, the great *muḥaddith* Ḥāfiẓ al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806); also the *Musal-sal bi-l-awwalīyyah* of Sharaf al-Dīn ibn al-Kuwayk (d. 821). Then he got *ijāzabs* for her in Syria in Dhū l-Qa'da 798, in Minā in Ṣafar 800 and again in Rabīʿ al-Ākhir 800, and later on.³

THE WOMEN'S OWN EFFORTS

We have recounted some of the efforts of men to enable the teaching of women in order to illustrate how they followed the *Sunnah* in this regard. However, that does not mean that the women's interest in ḥadīth was prompted only by the interest of their guardians or husbands. Rather, for a great number of women interest in knowledge of the *dīn* was deeply personal, without anybody prompting them or paving the way for them.

¹'Abd al-Qādir ibn Abī l-Wafā' AL-QURASHĪ (d. 775), *al-Jawābir al-muḍīyyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*, ii. 244–46, 278–79. ²IBN AL-ḤĀJJ, *al-Madkhal*, ii. 215, cited in MASHHŪR, 'Ināyat al-nisā', 122. ³AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar fī Tarjamah Shaykh al-Islām IBN ḤAJAR*, iii. 1208.

Thābit has narrated from Anas that Abū Bakr called ʿUmar to go with him to visit Umm Ayman since the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam*, used to visit her. They found her crying, and asked her why, reminding her that whatever is with God is better for His Messenger. 'She said: I am not crying because I did not know that what is with God is better for His Messenger. Rather, I am crying because the revelation from heaven has been cut off. [Saying that as she did] she made them weep also.'¹

During the Prophet's lifetime women were anxious not to miss any opportunity to learn from him. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal has narrated from ʿAbdullāh ibn Rāfiʿ that he said:

Umm Salamah narrated that while she was combing her hair, she heard the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – saying on the pulpit: O people. She said to her hairdresser: Wrap my hair. She said: May I be sacrificed for you, he is only saying, 'O people'. Umm Salamah said: I said to her: Woe to you! Are we not from the people? Then she wrapped her hair and stood in a place in her room from where she could hear the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam*. Umm Salamah said: Then I heard him saying: O people, while I am at the *Ḥawḍ* on the Day of Judgement you will be brought in groups. Then some of you will be taken into other ways. So I will call to you: Come along the way to me. Then a caller from behind me will cry out to me: Leave them, they changed after you. So I will say: Keep away, keep away.²

Fāṭimah bint Qays (mentioned in the previous chapter), the sister of al-Ḍaḥḥak ibn Qays, was among the early Emigrants. Her husband was killed in the first jihād. Soon after her waiting period had ended she heard the call to prayer and went to the mosque and prayed there. She says: 'I was in the row of the women. When the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – finished his prayer, he sat on the pulpit and he was smiling. Then he said: Let everyone remain in his place. Then he asked: Do you know why I have gathered you? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said: By God, I have

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Faḍāʾil*, bāb *fī faḍāʾil Umm Ayman*, *raḍi Allāhu ʿan-hā*.

²*Ibid.*, bāb *ithbāt ḥawḍ nabīyyi-nā ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam wa ṣifāti-hi*.

not gathered you for [any] thing you desire or for any thing that you fear. Rather, I have gathered you because Tamīm al-Dārī, who was a Christian, came, pledged allegiance and embraced Islam, and told me a story which confirms what I have been telling you about Anti-Christ.’ Then Fāṭimah narrated the whole long story of Tamīm al-Dārī.¹ Her dedication to learning can be gauged from the fact that, despite her recent bereavement, she hastened to the mosque when she learned that there was to be a sermon after it, then committed to memory the very long, detailed ḥadīth subsequently recorded in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim and other compilations, and confirmed in almost every detail by other narrators (see below, p. 188).

What the women asked about

We have noted that, during the Prophet’s lifetime, the women attended assemblies where men were present, and to have their particular matters dealt with they requested that a day be set aside exclusively for them. The Prophet indeed encouraged his Companions to ask him about whatever was concerning them and about any need relating to the duties and laws of the *dīn*. Jābir has narrated that the Prophet said: ‘The cure of ignorance is asking.’² He meant that for the ailment of ignorance there is no remedy other than asking and finding out. Also, God says in the Qur’ān (*al-Naḥl*, 16. 43): ‘Then ask the people of remembrance if you do not know.’

The books of ḥadīth record many of the questions put by women. Some examples of that we have already seen. A few more will serve to demonstrate the range of matters that the women were concerned about:

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Qibṭiyyah narrates from Umm Salamah that the Prophet stated that an army heading to the House of God will be destroyed by sinking into the earth. Umm Salamah

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan wa ashrāt al-Sā‘ah*, bāb *khurūj al-Dajjāl*. ²ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Ṭahārah*, bāb *fī l-majrūh yatayummam*. ³MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan wa ashrāt al-Sā‘ah*, bāb *al-jaysh al-ladhī ya‘ummu al-bayt*.

asked: 'What about one who was forced' [who did not choose to be in that army]? The Prophet said: 'He will be sunk with them. Then they will be raised according to their intentions.'³

Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab narrates from Khawlah bint Ḥakīm that she asked about whether the woman sees in her dream what the man sees. The Prophet, affirming it implicitly, explained to her that bathing becomes compulsory for the woman as for the man if, as a result of the dream, there is some emission.¹

Fāṭimah bint Abī Ḥubaysh wanted to know if, when after her regular monthly period some bleeding continued, she should leave the prayer. The Prophet distinguished regular menstrual bleeding, the duration of which varies between individuals and which prohibits from prayer, from bleeding from a vein, which must be washed away and does not affect the duty to pray.²

Mujāhid (d. ca. 100) has narrated from Asmā' bint 'Umayy the hadith about the wedding of 'Ā'ishah when there was only a bowl of milk for guests. When 'Ā'ishah offered some to her guests they said they did not desire any. The Prophet said: 'Do not combine a lie with hunger. Then [Asmā'] said: O Messenger of God, if one of us says about something that she desires, "I do not desire", will it be counted as a lie? The Prophet said: 'The lie is written as a lie and the small lie is written as a small lie.'³

Zaynab bint Abī Salamah narrates from her mother Umm Salamah that she said: 'I said: O Messenger of God, is there reward for me in spending on the children of Abū Salamah [my husband]. I can not leave them like that – they are my children as well. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: Yes, there is a reward for you in what you spend on them.'⁴

¹ AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan, Ṭabārah*, bāb *ghusl al-mar'ah tarā fi manāmi-hā mā yarā al-rajul*. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayḍ*, bāb *al-istiḥāḍah*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ḥayḍ*, bāb *al-mustaḥāḍah*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Ṭabārah*, bāb *man rawā anna l-ḥayḍa idhā adbarat lā tada'u l-ṣalāh*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-farq bayna dam al-ḥayḍ wa-l-istiḥāḍah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Ṭabārah wa sunani-hā*, bāb *mā jā'a fi l-mustaḥāḍah al-latī qad 'addat ayyāma aqrā'i-hā qabla an yastamirra bi-hā al-dam*; IBN ABĪ SHAYBAH, *Muṣannaf, Ṭabārahāt*, bāb *al-mustaḥāḍah kayfa taṣna'u*. ³ IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad, Musnad al-nisā'*. ⁴ *Ibid*.

About shyness in the way of learning

As we have just seen in the examples of the kinds of questions they asked, the women did not allow shyness to prevent them from seeking the knowledge that would strengthen their faith and practice and prepare them for the hereafter. Mujāhid said: 'The shy one (*mustahyī*) and the haughty one (*mustakbir*) cannot attain to knowledge.'¹ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar has commented on that: 'Shyness [*ḥayā*], shame] is a part of the faith. And that is the lawful [kind] that happens as respect and reverence for elders and great people, and it is praiseworthy. As for that shyness which leads to abandoning a legal matter – that is a rebuked and not a lawful shyness; rather, it is timidity and lowness, and that is what Mujāhid means when he said: the shy one cannot attain knowledge.'²

Thus the women Companions established the example for those after them of determined seeking after knowledge. They did not shy from asking even about what women feel shy to hear mentioned in front of men. Umm Salamah narrates that Umm Sulaym came to the Prophet and said: 'O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – God is not shy of saying the truth. Is a bath compulsory on a woman when she has a wet dream? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: [Yes.] When she sees the emission. Umm Salamah covered her face and said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – do women have wet dreams? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa-sallam* – said: Yes. May your hand be dusty! How otherwise does [a woman's] child become like her?'³ 'Ā'ishah once said: 'How good are the women of the Anṣār! Shyness did not prevent them from acquiring understanding of their *dīn*.'⁴

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'Ilm, bāb *al-hayā* fī l-'ilm. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *Fath al-bārī*, 'Ilm, bāb *al-hayā* fī l-'ilm. ³ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 'Ilm, bāb *al-hayā* fī l-'ilm. ('May your hand be dusty', literally rendered from the Arabic, is typically used, though it seems otherwise, to express criticism in an affectionate tone; there are similar usages in most languages.) ⁴ *Ibid*.

Women learning from the Companions

The women in the generation after the Companions, that of the Successors, put their questions to the Companions, both to the women and the men among them. Here is an example:

‘Abdullāh ibn Jābir al-Aḥmasī narrates from his paternal aunt Zaynab bint al-Muhājir that she said:

I went for ḥajj and with me was another woman. I set up my tent and I made a vow not to speak. Then a man came and stood by the door of the tent and said: *al-salamu ‘alaykum*. My friend answered. Then he said: What is the matter with your friend? I said: She will remain silent for she has vowed not to speak. He said: Speak, for [that kind of vow] is from the practice of Jāhiliyyah. She says: I asked him, who are you, may God have mercy on you? He answered: I am a man from the Emigrants. I asked: From which group of Emigrants? He said: From the Quraysh. I said: From which Quraysh? He said: You are a big one for questions! I am Abū Bakr. I said: O caliph of the Messenger of God! We are fresh from the Jāhiliyyah, when no one of us would feel security from others. God has brought to us what you see [meaning the peace and security around them]. So how long this will continue? He said: As long as your imāms remain righteous. I said: Who are the imāms? He said: Are there not among your people those nobles and leaders who are obeyed? I said: Surely. He said: Those are the imāms.¹

WOMEN'S PRESERVING OF THE ḤADĪTH

A sound ḥadīth is defined as one whose narrator has preserved it unchanged from the time he heard it until he conveyed it. Preservation entails alert listening to the words, understanding their meaning, holding that meaning, holding the wording, being firm on it with full awareness and checking it until its transmission. It is by two means: memorization and writing.

¹IBN SAʿD, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 470.

Memorization

Memorization, or preserving by heart, was the most popular form among the Companions, the Successors, the Followers, and those who came after them among the imāms and experts of ḥadīth. This is because knowledge preserved in the heart becomes part of the person, accompanies them always, almost like a mother tongue. ‘Affān ibn Muslim (d. 219) said: ‘I asked ‘Ubaydullāh ibn al-Ḥasan to bring out for me the book of al-Jurayrī. He refused and said: Go to Hilāl ibn Ḥaqq; he has got it. Then he said: I have found the most directly useful (*ahḍar*) knowledge is the one I preserved in my heart and uttered by my tongue.’¹ ‘Abd al-Razzāq said: ‘Any knowledge that does not “enter with its owner into the bathroom” – then do not consider it as knowledge.’ Al-Aṣmā’i (d. 217) says: ‘Any knowledge that does not “enter with me in the bathroom”, it is not knowledge.’¹

What is narrated about the memory of the traditionists may seem to us to be exaggerated. ‘Alī ibn Khashram narrates that he discussed with Ishāq ibn Rāhawayh (d. 238) the report of al-Sha‘bī saying: ‘Any black that I wrote on any white – I know it by heart; and it never happened that anyone narrated a ḥadīth to me and I asked him to repeat it.’ Then Ishāq said to me [‘Alī ibn Khashram]: ‘Are you surprised at this, O Abū Ḥasan? I said: Yes. Then Ishāq said: Then let me tell you about myself. I never wrote anything but [that by doing so] I learnt it by heart. And now it is as if I am looking at more than 70,000 ḥadīths in my book.’² He meant that he knew the ḥadīths by heart and could see them as if reading from his book.

The women memorized the ḥadīths of the Prophet as the men did. The wives of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam*, and other women who heard him knew his sayings by heart. Some among them narrated a large number of ḥadīths, notably ‘Ā’ishah. Nor are these ḥadīths narrated by women short texts.

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Jāmi‘ li-akhlāq al-rāwī*, ii. 250. The bathroom expression is used because that is where books were never taken. ² *Ibid*.

Rather, some are very lengthy. We mentioned how Fāṭimah bint Qays was able to commit to memory the long ḥadīth of Tamīm al-Dārī after hearing it once, and for years she taught it to her students from memory. Al-Ṭabarānī compiled *al-Aḥādīth al-tiwāl* (The long ḥadīths), which contains several narrated by women.

Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, considered the leading Successor, was exceptionally knowledgeable of Prophetic ḥadīths. His daughter learnt all of them by heart. Abū Bakr ibn Abī Dāwūd (d. 316) reports that ʿAbd al-Mālik ibn Marwān (the Umayyad caliph (r. 65–86) asked for Saʿīd’s daughter’s hand in marriage for his son al-Walīd. Saʿīd refused the proposal, preferring to marry her to one of his impoverished students. He, the husband, said about her: ‘She was among the most beautiful people, and most expert of those who know the Book of God by heart, and most knowledgeable of the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam*, and most aware of the right of the husband.’ Abū Nuʿaym (d. 430) has narrated that ‘one morning her husband took his cloak to go out. She said: Where are you going? He said: To the assembly of Saʿīd to get knowledge. She said to him: Sit here, I will teach you the knowledge of Saʿīd.’¹

Similarly, Imām Mālik’s daughter learnt all of his ḥadīths and memorized the whole *Muwattāʾ*, the best book of its time combining ḥadīth and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Al-Zubayr (d. 256) says: ‘Mālik had a daughter who knew his knowledge [the *Muwattāʾ*] by heart, and she used to be behind the door. When the reader made a mistake, she would correct him.’ Muḥammad, his son, was not drawn to study and scholarship. Sometimes he would pass by with his clothes in disarray. Mālik would say to his students: ‘Good manners are in the hand of God. This is my son and this is my daughter.’² Another Madinan who narrated extensively from Mālik among others is ʿĀbidah al-Madaniyyah. She was famed for knowing a lot of ḥadīths by heart Ibn al-Abbār says: ‘She narrated a lot of ḥadīths.’³

¹ ABŪ NUʿAYM, *Ḥilyat al-awliyāʾ*, ii. 167–68. ² AL-QĀDĪ ʿIYĀD, *Tartīb al-madārik*, i. 109–10. ³ MASHHŪR, *ʿInāyat al-nisāʾ*, 75.

While these prodigious feats of memory may appear, to us, to be exaggerated, they are likely to be accurate. It is a question of will combined with training. As of this writing, there are in Damascus 35 women who know the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī (including its chains of narrations) by heart. They are students of my shaykh, the excellent *muhaddith*, Nūr al-Dīn ʿItr.

Writing

Initially the Prophet prohibited the writing down from him of anything other than the Qurʾān, lest it be mixed with the Qurʾān. Later, he allowed the writing down of his sayings. It has been narrated from him, from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and other Companions that they said: ‘Secure the knowledge by writing.’¹

Writing was rare in Arabia until, from the early days of Islam, its importance was recognized. The Companions acquired this skill, and they began in it by copying out the verses of the Qurʾān and the ḥadīth. Women also took part in this effort. The Prophet himself instructed Shifāʾ bint ʿAbdullāh to teach writing to his wife Ḥaṣṣah.² Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463) says: ‘[Shifāʾ] was among the virtuous and intelligent women. The Prophet used to visit her.’³ Similarly, ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah, and many other women Companions were well known for writing. The letters of ʿĀʾishah and Umm Salamah are recorded in the sources. Al-Qalqashandī (d. 821) has mentioned that a group of women knew the skill of writing, and no one from among the *salaf* objected to that.⁴

The art of writing spread rapidly among women from the beginning of the second century AH onwards. The biographical dictionaries affirm that writing and the practice of calligraphy were taught from childhood, that even slave girls became proficient in it. They used to do calligraphy on shirts, flags, banners, cloaks, sleeves, turbans, bandages, headbands, pillows, handker-

¹ IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, *Jamīʿi bayān al-ʿilm wa faḍli-hī*, 91. ² IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, *Musnad al-nisāʾ*, vi. 372. ³ IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, *al-Istīʾāb fī maʿrifah al-aṣḥāb*, ii. 740. ⁴ al-Qalqashandī, as cited in MASHHŪR *ʿInāyat al-nisāʾ bi-l-ḥadīth al-nabawī*, 114.

chiefs, curtains, sheets, beds, sofas, cushions, crowns, the frames of windows and doors, and many other things.¹

When, in the later centuries, people relied on the major compilations of ḥadīth, which not all could memorize, writing became essential. There are many examples of women who wrote books of ḥadīth in their own hand. Here I will mention a few examples of *muḥaddithāt* celebrated for their calligraphy.

Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Mu’addib al-‘Aṭṭār (d. 480), also known by her *kunya* Umm al-Faḍl and as Bint al-Aqrā’, followed the famous calligrapher Ibn al-Bawwāb (d. 413) in the art and passed it on to many. The people referred to her writing as exemplary.² Ibn al-Jawzī says: ‘Her writing was extremely beautiful; she used to write on the pattern (*ṭarīqah*) of Ibn al-Bawwāb. The people practised under her. She was invited to write the peace treaty [with the Byzantines]. She travelled for the writing to ‘Amīd al-Mulk Abū Naṣr al-Kindī [d. 456].’³ Ibn Kathīr says: ‘She used to write the ‘mansūb’ calligraphy on the pattern of Ibn al-Bawwāb.’⁴ Al-Sam‘ānī says: ‘I heard Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Bāqī al-Anṣārī saying: I heard Fāṭimah bint al-Aqrā’ saying: I wrote a paper for ‘Amīd al-Mulk and he gave me one thousand dinars.’⁵ Evidently she was an important figure whose art was highly regarded and valued, and she travelled in this work.

Al-Sam‘ānī says about ‘Fakhr al-Nisā’ Umm Muḥammad Shuhdah, daughter of the famous *muḥaddith* Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Dīnawarī (d. 574): ‘She was from among the descendants of traditionists, distinguished, eloquent, and had beautiful handwriting. She wrote on the way of Bint al-Aqrā’. In her time there was no one in Baghdad who had handwriting like her. Usually she wrote for the caliph al-Muqtafi [r. 530–55].’⁶ Ibn al-Jawzī praises her calligraphy, her goodness and works of charity

¹ AL-WASHSHĀ’, *al-Zarf wa-l-zurafā’*, 317, 355 ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 480. ³ IBN AL-JAWZĪ (d. 597), *al-Muntaẓam fī ta’rīkh al-mulūk wa-l-umam*, ix. 40. ⁴ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihayah*, sub anno 480. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 481. ⁶ AL-DHAHABĪ *Ta’rīkh al-Islām* (sub anno 570–80), 147.

through a long life.¹ Al-Ṣafādī (d. 764) notes her extensive knowledge of ḥadīth, her piety, God-wariness, benevolence and calls her ‘the calligrapher, the pride of womanhood, a *muḥaddithah* of Iraq with a high *isnād*.’² Her style of writing (*mansūb*) gained much popularity and was taken up generation after generation.³

Another late example is of Fawz bint Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī from the descendants of al-‘Afif ibn Maṣṣūr. The vizier al-Hādī ibn Ibrāhīm says: ‘She was one of the scholars; she had a novel handwriting. Her calligraphy is well-known in the Qur’āns and prefaces that are with us and with others also. She used to teach Arabic to her relatives among the men. Her grave is in San‘a at al-Mashhad al-Aḥmar near the mosque of Ibn Wahb.’⁴

Writing marginal notes

Another application of the skill of writing was the women’s scholarly annotation in the margins of the books they studied. The great man of letters al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255) says: ‘Ja‘far ibn Sa‘īd the milk-brother and chamberlain (*ḥājib*) of Ayyūb ibn Ja‘far told me that Ja‘far ibn Yaḥyā’s *Tawqī‘āt* (concise writings) was mentioned to ‘Amr ibn Maṣ‘adah. He said: I have read the *tawqī‘āt* of Umm Ja‘far in the margins and at the foot [of the pages] of the books, I found them better in shortness and more encompassing in the meaning.’⁵

Comparison and correction

The people of ḥadīth were very strict about writing. They would accept a book only if it had been compared with the original of the shaykh from whom the book’s author says he is narrating. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says: ‘I asked the qāḍī Abū l-Ṭayyib Ṭāhir ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Ṭabarī about one who finds [in his written

¹ IBN AL-JAWZĪ, *al-Mashaykhah*, 209. ² AL-ṢAFĀDĪ, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, xvi. 190. ³ See IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, iii. 255–56. ⁴ ‘Abdullāh Muḥammad AL-ḤIBASHĪ, *Mu‘jam al-nisā’ al-Yamāniyyāt*, 162. ⁵ al-Jāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, i. 106–07.

notes a reference] to a shaykh named and described in the written [notes] but he does not [now] know him. The qāḍī said: It is not allowed for him to narrate that writing. The writing from which one narrates must have been compared with the original of the shaykh from whom [the narrator] is narrating.’¹ Hishām ibn ‘Urwah (d. 146) recalls: ‘My father would ask me: Have you written? I would say: Yes; then he would ask: Have you compared? I would say: No. Then he would say: You have not written.’ Abū Muḥammad Aflah ibn Bassām says: ‘I was with al-Qa‘nabī and I wrote down his ḥadīth. He asked me: Have you written down. I said yes. Then he asked, have you compared? I said, no. He said, then you did not do anything.’¹

Women traditionists adhered to the same strict practice. The great *muḥaddithah* Umm al-Kirām Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥatim al-Marwaziyyah (d. 465) is a famous narrator of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Her version of it has always been particularly popular. She compared her copy with her shaykh al-Kushmīhānī’s original. Later she settled in Makkah, where the people came to her from everywhere and heard the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ* from her. She would not allow anyone to narrate from her unless they had compared with her original. Al-Dhahabī says: ‘Whenever she narrated, she would compare with her original. She had knowledge and good understanding [combined] with goodness and worship.’² Al-Ṣafādī says: ‘Her book was very accurate.’³ Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089) says: She would be most accurate with her book and compare its copies.’⁴ Abū l-Ghanā‘im al-Narsī says: ‘Karīmah brought for me her original copy of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. I sat down in front of Karīmah and wrote down seven pages and read them with her. I wanted to compare [my copy] with her original by myself. She said: No, [I do not permit it] unless you compare it with me. Then I did comparison with her.’⁵

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 237. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 233. ³ AL-ṢAFĀDĪ, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, xxiv. 338. ⁴ IBN AL-‘IMĀD, *Shadharat al-dhabab*, iii. 314. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 234.

Chapter 3

Occasions, travels, venues for learning ḥadīth, and kinds of learning

This chapter begins with an account of the conditions and circumstances of the occasions, some public, others private, on which the women had an opportunity to learn the religion from the Prophet and his Companions. Next, it explains the precedents for travelling for the sake of learning ḥadīth, how those precedents were followed up in later centuries, and the different venues where the women studied. The chapter ends with a brief survey of the ways in which ḥadīths were learnt and diffused.

PUBLIC OCCASIONS

The women sometimes attended as a group. Shahr ibn Ḥawshab has narrated from Asmā' bint Yazīd that, in one such gathering, on seeing a woman who had on two gold bracelets, 'the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said to her: Would you wish God to make you wear two bracelets of fire?' Asmā' says: 'By God, I do not remember if she took them off [herself] or I took them off.'¹ The group could include young girls: Umm 'Alī bint Abī l-Ḥakam narrates from Umayyah bint Qays Abī l-Ṣalt al-Ghifāriyyah that she came among a company of women of the Ghifār tribe to the Prophet. It was the occasion of the Khaybar campaign and the women wanted to go to the battlefield in order to tend the wounded. The Prophet permitted this, saying: 'With the

¹ IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, *musnad al-nisā'*.

blessing of God.’ Then, Umayyah bint Qays tells her own part of the story:

Then we set out with him. I was a young girl. He made me sit on his she-camel behind the luggage. He got off in the morning and made his camel sit down. I saw the bag had got traces of blood from me. It was the first time I had a period. Then I sat forward on the camel [to hide it] and I was embarrassed. When the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – saw what happened to me and the traces of blood, he said: Perhaps you have had menstrual bleeding? I said: Yes. He said: Attend to yourself. Then, take a container of water, then put salt in it, then wash the affected part of the bag, then come back.’ I did so. When God conquered Khaybar for us, the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – took [out of the booty] this necklace that you see on my neck and gave it to me and put it on my neck with his hand. By God it will never be parted from me.

It remained on her neck until she died, and she made a will that it should be buried with her. Also, whenever she cleansed herself she used salt in the water and she stipulated in her will that salted water be used for the washing of her [body before burial].¹

This ḥadīth demonstrates that the Prophet permitted women to accompany him at home and while travelling – in this case on a military campaign, when he was surrounded by an army of men. Also, in its account of a personal memory (and the necklace) treasured for a lifetime, it presents a striking example of how fondly the Prophet was loved by those who learnt from him. Their fondness mirrors his solicitude for them, and the tenderness with which he responded when someone came to him with a need. The respectful attentiveness that has ever since characterized the traditional attitudes of Muslim students before their teachers, male or female, is derived as much from the example of the women as from the men who attended upon and served him. Shahr ibn Ḥawshab has narrated from Asmā’ bint Yazīd that she said: ‘I was holding the rein of ‘Aḍbā’, the she-camel of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa*

¹IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqat al-kubrā*, viii. 293.

sallam – when [verses of the] sūrat *al-Mā'idah* [were] revealed to him. Because of the heaviness of the revelation the camel's leg ('*aḍud*) was on the point of buckling (*daqqa*).¹

Another ḥadīth from Asmā' bint Yazīd illustrates how the women, when they called on the Prophet while he was with his Companions, were not inhibited from putting their questions to him.

Asmā' said: May my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – I am a representative (*wafīdah*) of the women to you. God has sent you as a Messenger to all men and women. So we have believed in you and your God. [Now,] we women are confined to the houses and bearing your children. You men [in what has been commanded to you] have been preferred over us by the *jumū'ah* and [other] congregational prayers, visiting the sick, attending funerals, [doing] ḥajj after ḥajj and, more than that, the jihād in the path of God. When [you] men go for ḥajj or 'umrah or jihād, we look after your property, we weave your clothes, and bring up your children. Will we not share with you in the reward? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – turned to his Companions with his whole face, then said: Have you heard any woman asking about her religion better than this? They said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – we never thought that any woman could be guided to something like that. Then the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – turned to her and said: Understand, O woman, and tell the other women behind you that [a wife's] looking after her husband, seeking his contentment and going along with his assent is equal to all that [i.e. all that the religion has commanded to the men]. [Narrator's comment:] The woman went back and her face was shining with happiness.²

The ḥajj; ḥajjat al-wadā'

The ḥajj pilgrimage, considered from the viewpoint of its being a public occasion, differs from the daily prayers at the mosque in that it happens only once a year, and indeed for the vast

¹ IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, *musnad al-nisā'*. ² IBN AL-ATHĪR (d. 630), *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vii. 17–18.

majority of believers only once a lifetime. The restrictions that apply to women's attendance at the mosque – praying in clearly separated rows and, where practicable, having different entrances to the mosque building, etc. – do not apply to the pilgrimage. By contrast with attendance at a local community mosque, in the great throngs of Makkah and Madinah during the ḥajj period, there is relatively little chance of repeat encounters between men and women of a kind that might distract them from the normal purpose of going to the mosque. Accordingly, we would expect that the women who attended the ḥajj during the lifetime of the Prophet would have heard as many ḥadīths as the men heard on the same occasion. That is indeed the case, and there is a reassuring identity in the content of what is narrated by different routes from the men and from the women.

Hajjat al-wadā', 'the farewell pilgrimage', so called because it was the last ḥajj to be led by the Prophet himself, was his final major address to the Muslims en masse. It was attended by a very large number of women and children, as well as the men. It is an important source of ḥadīths relating to the faith in general and to details of the rites of pilgrimage in particular. Some examples of the latter:

ʿĀ'ishah narrates that Asmā' bint ʿUmayy the wife of Abū Bakr, while going for ḥajj, delivered beside a tree. The Prophet asked Abū Bakr to ask her to take a bath and then to put on *iḥrām*.¹ From this report the jurists have derived that women, even in the state of impurity can put on *iḥrām* and the bath is a *sunnah* of putting on the *iḥrām* and does not mark the ending of the state of impurity. In another ḥadīth, ʿĀ'ishah said: 'I could still see stains of perfume on the head of the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – when he was in the state of *iḥrām*.'² Because of this ḥadīth Abū Ḥanīfah and other jurists

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Hajj*, bāb *iḥrām al-nufasā'* wa istiḥābābi iḡtisāli-hā li-l-*iḥrām*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Hajj*, bāb *mā tafʿalu l-nufasā'* ʿinda l-*iḥrām*.

²AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Hajj*, bāb *al-ṭīb ʿinda al-iḥrām*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Hajj*, bāb *al-ṭīb li-l-muḥrim ʿinda al-iḥrām*.

have held that before making the intention for ḥajj or ‘umrah one can apply perfume, even if traces of it remain after putting on *iḥrām*. In another ḥadīth ‘Ā’ishah reports: ‘We were in the state of *iḥrām* with the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*. When a stranger passed by us, we would let down our head-covering [i.e. so as to veil the face], and when [the stranger] had passed us, then we would raise it [again].’¹ The jurists have inferred from this that for women in general (i.e. other than the Prophet’s wives) head-coverings may be worn during the time of ḥajj provided they do not touch the face. Yūsuf ibn Māhak narrated from his mother from ‘Ā’ishah that she said: ‘I said: O Messenger of God, should we not build for you a house in Minā? He said: No, Minā is a station of those who arrive earliest.’² The meaning is that one cannot reserve a place for oneself at Minā. Muḥīrah ibn Ḥakīm narrated from Ṣafiyyah bint Shaybah, from Tamlik (a woman Companion who had a house overlooking Ṣafā and Marwah) that she said: ‘I watched the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – while I was in my upper room between Ṣafā and Marwah and he was saying: O people! God has prescribed the *sa‘y* [the running between Ṣafā and Marwah] for you, so do *sa‘y*.’³

The ḥajj was also an opportunity to get answers to more general questions, not connected to the rites of pilgrimage. A couple of examples must suffice to illustrate how the women, in spite of the press of people, managed to put their questions directly to the Prophet.

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās has narrated that Faḍl ibn ‘Abbās (who is reported to have been an exceptionally handsome boy) was sitting behind the Messenger of God during the ḥajj. A woman from Khath‘am came and began to stare at Faḍl, who stared back. The Prophet turned Faḍl’s face away with his hand to

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Manāsik*, bāb *fī l-muḥrimah tughaṭṭī wajha-hā*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Manāsik*, bāb *al-muḥrimah tustūl al-thawb ‘alā wajhi-hā*.

² ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Manāsik*, bāb *tahrīm ḥaram Makkah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Manāsik*, bāb *al-nuzūl bi Minā*. ³ IBN ABĪ ‘ĀSIM (d. 287), *al-Āḥād wa-l-mathānī*, vi. 222.

prevent that. Then the woman asked: ‘O Messenger of God, God’s command to do ḥajj has become valid on my father when he is very old and cannot sit on a camel. Can I do ḥajj for him? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Yes. And that was during *ḥajjat al-wadā’*.¹ Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh narrates: ‘A woman brought her child to the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – during his ḥajj and said: O Messenger of God, is there a ḥajj for this child? He said: Yes, and you will get reward [for that].’²

It is remarkable that the women were so intent on finding out what the religion required of them and then so zealous in preserving and transmitting what they learnt. Equally remarkable is the degree of conformity between their different accounts – the minor variations serve as evidence of their truthfulness in reporting what they remembered.

Shabīb ibn Gharqadah narrates from Jamrah bint Quḥāfab that she said:

I was with *umm al-mu’minīn* Umm Salamah during *ḥajjat al-wadā’*. Then I heard the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – say: O my *ummah* (*ya ummatā*), have I conveyed the message to you? She says: My little boy asked why is the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – calling to his mother? She says: I said: My son, he means his *ummah*. And he was saying: Listen! The property of each of you, your honour, your blood [i.e. life] is inviolable to you as this day is inviolable in this town in this month.³

Rabī‘ah ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥuṣayn narrated about his grandmother Sarrā’ bint Nabḥān who had been a temple priestess before embracing Islam:

She heard the Messenger of God in *ḥajjat al-wadā’* on the day that is called ‘the day of the heads’ [i.e. the day of the sacrifice] say: What is

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥajj*, bāb *wujūb al-ḥajj wa faḍl-hi*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥajj*, bāb *al-ḥajj ‘an al-‘ajīz*. ² AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Ḥajj*, bāb *mā jā’a fī ḥajj al-ṣabī*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Manāsik*, bāb *mā jā’a fī ḥajj al-ṣabī*; MUSLIM has narrated it from Ibn ‘Abbās in *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥajj*, bāb *ṣiḥḥat ḥajj al-ṣabī*. ³ ABŪ NU‘AYM AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 206.

this day? [The people] said: God and his Messenger know best. He said: This is the best of the days of *tashrīq* [10 Dhū l-Ḥijjah]. Then he said: What is this town? They said: God and His Messenger know best. He said, *al-mash‘ar al-ḥarām*. Then he said: Listen! the blood of each of you, your properties and your honour, are inviolable in this town of yours. Listen! I do not know, perhaps I will not see you after this day, so the nearest of you must convey to the furthest of you. Listen! have I conveyed the message? They answered: Yes. Then he made his way back to Madinah where he died.’¹

PRIVATE OCCASIONS

Women had an advantage over men in being able freely to visit the Prophet’s wives and using this opportunity to learn. Some examples have come earlier. I give here a few more:

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥumayd has narrated from his father, from his mother Umm Kulthūm bint ‘Uqbah from Busrah bint Ṣafwān that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – called on [us] while I was combing the hair of ‘Ā’ishah. He said: Busrah, who is proposing marriage to Umm Kulthūm? I said: So-and-so and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf. He said: Then why not marry [her] to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, for he is among the best of the Muslims and of their leaders? I said: Umm Kulthūm dislikes to marry someone who already has a wife; nor does she like to ask ‘Abd al-Raḥmān [to divorce] his previous wife, for she is her cousin. Then the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – repeated his suggestion and said: If she marries [him] she will be happy and she will rejoice [in it]. I came back and I told Umm Kulthūm. She called ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, and [her relatives] Khālīd ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān. These two married her to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf.’²

Zaynab, the wife of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, was an artisan, able to make some income by selling the things she made. This

¹IBN ABĪ ‘ĀṢIM, *al-Āḥād wa-l-mathānī*, vi. 92. ²ABŪ NU‘AYM AṢBAḤĀNĪ, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 195; AL-ḤĀKIM, *al-Mustadrak ‘alā l-Ṣaḥīḥayn*, iii. 350.

is an important ḥadīth narrated from her by ‘Amr ibn al-Ḥārith, and worth quoting in full:

She said: The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – gave a speech to us women in which he said: Give charity, even if it is from your jewelry, because [otherwise] you may be the most [numerous] among all the people of the Fire on the Day of Resurrection. She said: My husband ‘Abdullāh was a man of light hand [i.e. of little wealth]. I said to him: Ask the Messenger of God for me – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – is it enough for my [giving] charity that I spend on my husband and on orphans under my guardianship? She said: Awe of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was settled in the heart of the people; [for that reason] my husband said to me: You go and ask him. She said: Then I went out until I came to his door, where I found a woman from the Anṣār, her name was also Zaynab, and she had come to ask the same question. She says: Then Bilāl came out to us; we said to him: Ask the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – for us: is it enough for our [giving] charity if we spend on our own husbands and orphans under our guardianship. She says then Bilāl went inside and said to the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – that it is Zaynab at the door. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Which Zaynab? Bilāl said: Zaynab, the wife of ‘Abdullāh, and Zaynab, a woman from the Anṣār. They are asking you about spending on their husbands and orphans under their guardianship. Will that be enough for their [giving] charity? She says: Then Bilāl came out to us and said: The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – says: For you there is double reward: the reward of [being good to family] relations and the reward of [giving] charity.¹

The circumstances of this ḥadīth are of particular interest in that they demonstrate that ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd – famous as one of the leading jurists in the early period of Islam – saw no harm in his wife’s going out for advice on a matter that he could have followed up himself. Also, the Prophet’s concern to identify the questioner is a reminder that knowing about the

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Zakāh*, bāb *al-zakāh ‘alā l-ṣawj wa-l-aytām fī l-hijr*, MUSLIM *Ṣaḥīḥ, Zakāh*, bāb *fadl al-naḥaqah wa-l-ṣadaqah ‘alā l-aqrabīn wa-l-ṣawj*...

questioner is relevant to identifying their need precisely and making the form of the answer appropriate to their ability to understand and willingness to act upon the advice. That in turn means that he did not disdain to take an interest in the personal circumstances of his Companions. His concern for them was not formal or abstract, but warm, intimate, and that is why, or at least partly why, he was so deeply trusted and loved by them.

Anas ibn Mālik narrates from Salāmah, who looked after the Prophet's son, Ibrāhīm, that she said:

O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – you convey all good news and glad tidings to the men, and do not tell women glad tidings. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Have your companions [meaning other women] sent you for this? She said: Yes, they have commanded me to ask you this question. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Will one of you not be content [to know] that when she is pregnant by her husband and he is happy with her, she gets the same reward as one who is fasting the day and praying the night in the path of God? [That] when she has labour pains, those who are in the heaven and the earth do not know what comfort has been hidden in store for [her]? [And that] when she delivers the child, for every sucking that child does, she has a good deed [added to her reckoning]? [And that] when the child causes her to wake in the night, she gets the reward [the equal of] of freeing seventy slaves in the path of God? Salāmah, do you know, who I mean by this great reward? It is for those women who are pure, righteous, obedient to their husbands and never ungrateful to them.¹

We know that the Prophet visited his Companions in their houses, that he called on his female relatives and, when there was a need for that, also on other women. Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī Ḥathmah has narrated that the Prophet prayed in the house of al-Shifā' on the right side as one enters. He prayed also in the house of Busrah bint Ṣafwān.² On such occasions

¹ ABŪ NU‘AYM AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 253. ² Ibn Shabbah AL-NUMAYRĪ (d. 262), *Akbbār al-madīnah al-nabawiyyah*, i. 74.

the women of that house were able to profit from the chance to hear his judgements, to put questions and learn from him.

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith al-Hāshimī has narrated from Umm al-Faḍl that she said:

The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was in my house. Then a bedouin came and said: O Messenger of God, I had a wife then I married another one. My first wife claims that she has breast-fed the second one once or twice. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: One or two actions of breast-feeding do not make anyone unlawful.¹

Yazīd ibn al-Hād narrated from Hind bint al-Ḥārith, from Umm al-Faḍl that she said:

The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – called upon [her husband] ‘Abbās, the uncle of the Prophet, while he was ill. ‘Abbās wished to die. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: O ‘Abbās, O uncle of the Messenger of God, do not wish death. For if you are a good-doer you will increase your good deeds and that will be better for you. And if you are a wrong-doer, then if you are respited, you will have a chance to ask forgiveness. So do not wish death.²

The Prophet visited al-Rubayyi‘ bint Mu‘awwidh on the morning of her marriage. She narrates:

The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – called upon me on the day of my marriage and sat down on [this] spot on this bed of mine, and two girls were beating *duff* and singing about my fathers who were killed in the battle of Badr. In their song, they said: We have a prophet who knows what will happen tomorrow. The Prophet of God, *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*, said: As for this bit, do not say it.³

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Raḍā‘, bāb *al-maṣṣah wa-l-maṣṣatān*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *lā tuḥarrim al-maṣṣah wa lā al-maṣṣatān*; AL-NASA’Ī, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *al-qadr al-ladhī yuḥarrimu min al-raḍā‘ah*; AL-DĀRIMĪ, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *kam raḍā‘ah tuḥarrim*.²IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, *musnad al-nisā’*.

³IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 477; AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *darb al-duff fi l-nikāḥ wa-l-walimah*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Adab*, bāb *fi l-nahy ‘an al-ghinā’*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *mā jā’a fi i‘lān al-nikāḥ*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *al-ghinā’ wa-l-duff*.

Anas ibn Mālik narrates that the Messenger of God visited Umm Sulaym and did *nafl* prayer in her house and said: 'O Umm Sulaym, when you pray *fard ṣalāh*, then say *subhān al-lāh* ten times, *al-ḥamdu li-l-lāh* ten times and *al-lāhu akebar* ten times. Then ask God whatever you want: for you will be answered with Yes, Yes, Yes.'¹ Anas ibn Mālik also narrates:

The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – used to visit Umm Sulaym and she would offer him something that she prepared for him. I had a brother younger than me whose *kunyah* was Abū ‘Umayr. One day, the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – visited us and said: Why is Abū ‘Umayr down-hearted? Umm Sulaym said: his *ṣa‘wāb* [a small bird] that he used to play with has died. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – began to stroke his head and said [consoling him with a little rhyme]: O Abū ‘Umayr, what befell *nughayr* [the bird]?²

The Messenger of God respected Umm Ḥarām for his kinship with her and used to visit her home and take rest there. She was the maternal aunt of Anas ibn Mālik. He narrates:

Umm Ḥarām bint Miḥnān narrated to me that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – took rest in her house once. Then he woke up and he was smiling. I said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – why are you smiling? He said: Some people of my community were shown to me riding the sea like kings on thrones. I said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – pray to God that He makes me among them. He prayed and said: You are among them. Then ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit married her and travelled with her to [join] the naval campaign. [On the way] she died after falling down from her mount.³

¹ IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 426. ² *Ibid.*, 427; AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Adab*, bāb *al-kunyah li-l-ṣabī wa qabla an yūlad li-l-rajuḥ*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Adab*, bāb *istibbāb taḥnīk al-mawlūd ‘inda wilādati-hi*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Adab*, bāb *fi l-rajuḥ yatakannā wa laysa la-hu walad*. ³ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ta‘bīr*, bāb *al-ruḥyah bi-l-nahār*; IBN AL-ATHĪR, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vii. 305. (The naval campaign, to Cyprus in 27 AH, took place under Mu‘āwiyah’s governorship during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān.)

The Night Journey of the Prophet took place when he was in the house of his cousin Umm Hānī bint Abī Ṭālib. The biographer Ibn Ishāq cites the ḥadīth from her that she said:

That journey took place when the Messenger of God was in my house. He slept the night there. He prayed *ʿishā*. Then he slept and we also slept. When it was a little before the dawn he woke us up. After he did the morning prayer and we also did it with him, he said: 'Umm Hānī, I prayed with you in the night prayer as you saw in this valley. Then I came to Jerusalem and prayed there. Then he mentioned the whole story.¹

With the ending of prophethood the duty to teach, for which the Prophet had prepared them, was carried by the learned ones among his Companions and those after them who emulated them in virtue and piety. Women were among these teachers but here our interest is on their efforts as students. A substantial body of information about the qualities of the Companions and their teaching relies on those efforts. In his account of Unaysah al-Nakhaʿiyyah, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr says that she said about Muʿādh's coming to the Yemen: 'Muʿādh said to us: I am the messenger of the Messenger of God to you. Pray five times a day, fast the month of Ramaḍān, do the ḥajj of the House [in Makkah], those among you who can manage it. And Muʿādh at that time was eighteen years old.'² Ismāʿīl al-Bazzār has narrated that Umm ʿAfif said: 'I saw ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib wearing a red cloak like the cloaks of labourers; it had a white patch on it.'³ Abū Ubaydah has narrated from Lu'lu'ah, the freed slave of Umm al-Ḥakam bint ʿAmmār that she described ʿAmmār for them and said that 'he was tall, brown... broad-shouldered, and he did not change [his] white hair [by dyeing it].'⁴

The women visited scholars in their homes to ask them about matters of religion or guidance in it. Umm Ṭalq narrates: 'I called on Abū Dharr and I saw him – hair disordered, dusty;

¹ IBN HISHĀM, *al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah*, ii. 43–44. ² IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, *al-Istīʿāb*, ii. 708. ³ IBN ABĪ L-DUNYĀ, *al-Khumūl wa-l-tawāḍuʿ*, no. 132. ⁴ IBN SAʿD, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, iii. 264.

in his hand, wool [and] he had two sticks that he was knitting with. I did not see anything in his house. So I gave him some flour and grilled flour. Then he said: As for your reward, it is upon God.¹ Abū l-Ṣabāḥ has narrated from Umm Kathīr bint Marqad that she said: 'I and my sister called on Anas ibn Mālik. I said: My sister wants to ask you something, but she feels shy. He said: She should ask, for I have heard the Messenger of God say 'Seeking knowledge is a duty'. My sister said to him: I have a son who is [spending much time] playing with pigeons. He said: It is the pastime of hypocrites.'² Bishr ibn 'Umar narrates from Umm 'Abdān, wife of Hishām ibn Ḥassān, that she said: 'We were staying with Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn as guests. We used to hear his weeping in the night [i.e. during prayer and supplication] and his laughter in the day [as part of entertaining his guests].'³ Āṣim al-Aḥwāl narrates from Karīmah bint Sīrīn that she said: 'I asked 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar: I have bound myself to fast every Wednesday; and the coming Wednesday is the day of sacrifice. He said: God has commanded fulfillment of vows and the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – has prohibited fasting on the day of sacrifice.'⁴ Ibn 'Umar was indicating that she must do the fast as she had vowed to, but on another day.

'Umar ibn Qays narrated from his mother that she called on 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr in his house while he was praying. A snake fell from the roof onto his son Hāshim, and coiled itself on his stomach:⁵

All the people of the house cried Snake! and chased it until they killed it. But 'Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr continued praying. He did not turn his face and he did not hasten. He finished his prayer after the snake had already been killed. Then he said: What happened to you? Hāshim's

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, ii. 74. ² BAḤSHAL AL-WĀSITĪ (d. 292), *Ta'riḫ Wāsiṭ*, 70. 'Hypocrites' in Islamic usage means those whose religion is, by the standards of the Companions, enfeebled by other goals than doing God's will. ³ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Ta'riḫ Baghdad*, v. 335. ⁴ IBN ḤIBBĀN (d. 354), *K. al-Thiqāt*, v. 343. ⁵ IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'riḫ Dimashq al-kabīr (al-Juz' al-thālith min tarājim ḥarf al-ayn)*, 413.

mother said: May God have mercy on you! If we do not, does not your son also matter to you? ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Zubayr said: Woe to you! what would have been left of my prayer if I had turned away?

Ḥajjāj ibn Ḥassān narrates that he and his sister called on Anas ibn Mālīk. Addressing Ḥajjāj, his sister al-Mughīrah said:

You, at that time were a young boy and you had two plaits in your hair. Anas ibn Mālīk passed his hand over your head and blessed you and said: Shave these two plaits or cut them off, because they are [in a distinctively] Jewish style.¹

Sometimes, following the Prophet’s example, it was the scholars who would call on the women. Hazzān ibn Sa‘īd has narrated from Umm al-Ṣa‘bah that she said: ‘Abū l-Dardā’ visited us at the time of *fitnah* when we were gathered and said: Die, [so that] the rule of children does not reach you [i.e. Die, so that you do not have to live to see Muslims subjected to dynastic rule].² Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Ubaydullāh has narrated from Karīmah bint Ḥaṣḥās al-Muzaniyyah that she said: ‘I heard Abū Hurayrah in the house of Umm al-Dardā’ saying: The Messenger of God said: Three things are [remnants from the time] of unbelief – excessive bewailing of the dead; tearing of the clothes; and accusing people about their lineage.’³

TRAVELLING

Travelling for knowledge is among the higher qualities that the Prophet encouraged: ‘Whoever walks a way for seeking knowledge, God will facilitate for him a way to paradise.’⁴ It has long

¹ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Tarajjūl*, bāb *mā jā’a fī l-rukhsa*. Muslims are discouraged from imitating non-Muslims in matters and manners connected to the non-Muslims’ religious symbols or worship. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Talkhīṣ al-mutashābih*, i. 406. *Fitnah* here refers to the civil strife among the Muslims from the latter part of the rule of ‘Uthmān through the rule of ‘Alī. ³IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Ta’rīkh Dimashq, tarājīm al-nisā’*, 314. ⁴MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Dhikr wa-l-du‘ā’*, bāb *faḍl al-ijtimā‘ ‘alā tilāwat al-Qur’ān*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Muqaddimah*, bāb *faḍl al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-ḥathth ‘alā ṭalab al-‘ilm*.

been an established tradition among Islamic scholars, particularly among the *muḥaddithūn*. Ibrāhīm ibn Adham (d. 162) said: 'God removes the trial from this *ummah*, because of the travelling of the people of ḥadīth.' Imām Mālik has narrated from Yahyā ibn Saʿīd from Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab that he said: 'I used to travel for days and nights for a single ḥadīth.' Naṣr ibn Marzūq narrates from 'Amr ibn Abī Salamah that he said: 'I said to Awzāʿi: Abū 'Amr [*kunyah* of Imām Awzāʿi], I have been accompanying you all the time for the last four days and I did not hear from you except thirty ḥadīths. He said: Do you consider thirty ḥadīths little in four days? Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh travelled to Egypt [for one ḥadīth]: he bought a camel and rode it until he arrived there and asked 'Uqbah ibn 'Āmir about a single ḥadīth and came back to Madina. And you consider thirty ḥadīths little in four days!'¹

It is preferred that study begins with the scholars of one's own locality, and among them those with higher (i.e., shorter) *isnāds*, with fewer narrators in the chain, bringing one closer to the original source. After that, one should go to hear and study ḥadīth with teachers in other towns. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal commended travelling to get a higher *isnād*, and gave this example: 'Alqamah and al-Aswad received the ḥadīth of 'Umar through other people, but they would not be satisfied until they travelled to 'Umar [himself], then heard [the ḥadīth] from him [directly].'²

Hajj journeys

Women also travelled to get the knowledge of the scholars of other towns. We showed earlier that women accompanied the men on some military campaigns and, despite the rigours of this kind of travelling, accumulated ḥadīths and *sunnahs* on the way. However, for obvious reasons, the major focus of Muslim travelling was, and remains, the annual pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah. The ḥajj quickly became established as the occasion

¹ AL-ḤAKIM, *Maʿrifat ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*, 10–11. ² IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 148.

for scholars from different centres of learning in the Islamic world to meet. Sometimes, students of ḥadīth undertook ḥajj journeys with the primary intention of meeting the ulema.¹ The meetings and exchanges among scholars diffused the *Sunnah* widely and thereby gave an enduring cohesion and solidarity to the Islamic way of life. This cultural unity was, for all practical purposes, disconnected from political power and was therefore only very briefly, and only regionally, reflected in political unity. It is important to reflect on, and properly acknowledge, the central role of women, as scholars and teachers, and as the first resource for children growing up in Islam, in preserving and sustaining, and diffusing, the *Sunnah*.

We have seen examples of ḥadīths that the women acquired during *ḥajjat al-wadāʿ*. I give below examples of their learning, after the Prophet passed away, from his Companions and their Successors.

Al-Ḥakam ibn Jaḥl narrates from Umm al-Kirām that she said: 'There [during the ḥajj] I met a woman in Makkah who had a lot of servants, and she had no jewelry other than silver. I said to her: Why does no one from among your servants have any jewelry other than the silver. She said: My grandfather was with the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – and I also was with him and I had two golden earrings. The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: Two metals of the Fire. So no-one from our house wears any jewelry other than silver.'²

Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq narrates from his mother al-ʿĀliyah bint Ayfaʿ ibn Sharāḥīl that she did ḥajj with Umm Maḥabbah. The two of them called on ʿĀʾishah, greeted her with *salām*, and asked her questions and heard ḥadīths from her.³ Abū Ḥibbān narrates from his father from Maryam bint Ṭāriq that she told

¹AL-DHAHABĪ (*Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, viii. 457) says: 'A large number of ḥadīth students took journeys and their motive would not be other than meeting Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah for his imāmah and the highness of his *isnād*.' ²ABŪ NUʿAYM AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 407. ³IBN SAʿD, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 487.

him how she, among a group of Anṣārī women had called on ‘Ā’ishah during the ḥajj and asked her about intoxicating drinks and their ingredients and containers. This is a long ḥadīth. Abū Hibbān says: ‘My father narrated this ḥadīth to me when Maryam bint Ṭāriq was still alive.’¹

Kathīr ibn Ziyād narrates from Mussah al-Azdiyyah that she said: I did ḥajj, then I called on Umm Salamah. I said: O *umm al-mu’minīn*, Samurah ibn Jundub commands the women to do the prayer missed on account of the menstrual period. She said: No, they are not to do the missed prayer. The women used to sit [i.e. not stand to pray] for forty days on account of post-natal bleeding. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – never ordered them to do the missed prayer of that time.² Ismā’īl ibn Abī Khālid narrated from his mother and his sister that both called on ‘Ā’ishah during the ḥajj in Minā. ‘A woman asked her: Is it allowed for me to cover my face while I am in the state of *iḥrām*? [‘Ā’ishah] lifted her scarf from her chest and put it over her head.’³ She demonstrated in this way that only the head should be covered, not the face.

In later periods also, the ḥajj served as an opportunity to meet scholars and learn from them. One example is Maryam (also known as Umm Hānī, d. 871) bint al-Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Taqī al-Dīn al-Hūrimiyyah. She was a granddaughter of the qāḍī Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Qayātī, and the mother al-‘Allamah Ṣayf al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, born on 15 Sha‘bān 678, a Friday, in Egypt. Her maternal grandfather was specially solicitous of her education and took her to Makkah, where she studied ḥadīth with ‘Afīf al-Dīn al-Nashāwarī, Abū l-‘Abbās ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭī‘; Shihāb al-

¹ *Ibid.*, 488. ² ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Ṭabārah*, bāb *mā jā’a fī waqt al-nufasā’*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi’*, *abwāb al-Ṭabārah*, bāb *mā jā’a fī kam tamkuthu al-nufasā’*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Ṭabārah*, bāb *mā jā’a fī l-nufasā’ kam tajlis*; AL-DĀRIMĪ, *Sunan, Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-mar’ah al-ḥā’id tuṣallī fī thawbi-hā*.

³ IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 494. ⁴ AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *Daw’ al-Lāmi’*, xii. 156.

Dīn Zāhīrah and Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī. She continued her studies in Egypt.⁴

Women also undertook journeys that were expressly for knowledge. The famous expert of ḥadīth, much sought after for her high *isnād*, Shaykhah Umm al-Kirām Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim al-Marwaziyyah, (d. 463) travelled in the path of knowledge to Sarakhs, Isfahan, Jerusalem, and then to Makkah. Al-Dhahabī says: ‘Her father was from Kushmīhan then travelled with her to Jerusalem and returned with her to Makkah [... ...] She studied *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with Abū l-Haytham al-Kushmīhanī; she studied also with Zāhir ibn Aḥmad Sarakhsī and ‘Abdullāh ibn Yūsuf ibn Bāmūyah al-Aṣbahānī.’¹

Another scholar who made many journeys in the cause of knowledge of the religion is the shaykhah of high *isnād* Umm ‘Abd al-Karīm Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr ibn Muḥammad ibn Sahl al-Anṣārī al-Andalusī al-Balansī (?525–600). Her life’s work contributed greatly to consolidating and extending the knowledge of Baghdad and the Islamic east before the catastrophe brought to this region by the Mongols. She was following in the wake of other great scholars who responded to the (earlier) disruption and destruction, wrought by the Crusaders and their occupation, by carrying ‘the knowledge’ westwards through Syria and the Levant to Egypt. It is improbable that Fāṭimah, who travelled so much and so widely, did not travel to the Ḥaramayn, but the sources do not record that she did the ḥajj. Her extraordinary toil (she was attending ḥadīth classes from the age of four or seven) and achievement are a fitting summary of this chapter. Following an overview of the venues where women (and men) studied ḥadīth, the different ways in which ḥadīths were passed from teachers to students, and the documentation that accompanied this, I present a brief sketch of the scholarly career of Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr. The map accompanying this sketch should give some sense, both of the physical effort of covering such distances at that time, and of the ‘travel networks’ among

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 233.

scholars. While the sources do not specify the route of scholars' journeys, the line of travel as shown follows well-established trade routes and so is fairly reliable – Sa'd al-Khayr, the father, was a merchant as well as a *muḥaddith*.

VENUES

The sources record that ḥadīth classes were sometimes held in shops whose owners were scholars of ḥadīth or interested in ḥadīth. This practice was very popular in the early period (there are examples from Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, Wāsiṭ and Damascus), but there are also examples from later centuries.¹ Gardens or orchards and farms were also used for ḥadīth classes, but we will mention these in a later chapter. *Ribāṭs*,² typically located on the edge of cities, functioned as retreats where people would go to deepen their knowledge and understanding, and strengthen their practice, of the religion. Ḥadīth classes were a core element of the teaching and well-attended, specially in the later period. Ribāṭ Qalanīsī (Damascus) was perhaps the most important one, where ḥadīth classes were held regularly and well attended by both men and women. Shaykh Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Sulamī's *ribāṭ* in Damascus was also popular: Shaykhah Rabī'ah bint 'Alī ibn Maḥfūz ibn Ṣaṣrā studied *Ḥadīth Abī 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī* there in 572.³ Khadījah bint Abī Bakr ibn Salīmān al-Wā'iz al-Ḥamawī studied, in a class of twenty students, *Aḥādīth Ṭālūt* of Abū 'Uthmān Ṭālūt ibn 'Abbād al-Sayrafī al-Baṣrī (d. 238) with 'Abd al-Jalīl ibn Abī Ghālīb ibn Abī l-Ma'ālī al-Surayjānī in a Damascus *ribāṭ* in 610.⁴ Āsiyah bint Muḥam-

¹ An example: Asmā' bint Aḥmad ibn 'Alam ibn Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Ḥarrānī attended a class of 17 students on *K. al-Adab* of AL-BAYHAQĪ (d. 458) with Zayn al-Dīn Ayyūb ibn Nī'mah ibn Muḥammad ibn Nī'mah al-Maqdisī in his shop in the book-sellers' market in Damascus in 724.

² *Ribāṭ*: originally a 'border stronghold or fortress'. The duty to guard the frontiers of Islam is strongly urged in several Prophetic ḥadīths; many eminent Companions served as sentries in the *ribāṭs*. ³ LEDER *et al.*, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 305–06. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 119, 290.

mad ibn ‘Alī al-Dimashqī al-Iskāf studied *Amālī Ibn Bishrān* of Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Mālik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān (d. 430) with Diyā’ al-Dīn ‘Īsā Abū Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Maghārī in Ribāṭ al-Qalānisī in 703.¹

However, in all periods, the principal venues where women studied ḥadīth were their own or relatives’ houses, or the houses of others, and in mosques and schools.

Houses

Women’s study of ḥadīth began in their homes if anyone from the family or from outside would teach them there. The teachers could be men or women. Sometimes the women students would attend classes in the teachers’ houses, a practice that has lasted to our time. I give a few examples from the later periods, as found in the sources.

It is recorded that in Damascus in the year 685, the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Āminah bint al-Imām al-Zāhid Taqī al-Dīn Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī Aḥmad ibn Faḍl al-Wāsiṭiyyah al-Dimashqiyyah (d.740), studied at home with her father *al-Fawā’id al-Multaḥḥah wa-l-Fawā’id al-Multaqatah*, containing the ḥadīths of Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī l-Faṭḥ al-Khiraqī (d. 579), selected by Muḥammad ibn Makkī ibn Abī l-Rajā’ ibn al-Faḍl.² In Qāsyūn in Damascus in 718, Malikah bint al-Jamāl ibn ‘Alī studied *K. al-Shukr li-l-lāh ta‘āla* of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā (d. 281) with her maternal grandfather Abū Bakr ibn Zayn al-Dīn Abī l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im al-Maqdisī in his house.³ She studied, also with him and in his house, *K. al-Karam wa-l-jūd wa-l-sakhā’ al-nufūs* of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Barjalānī (d. 238).⁴

Among those who attended classes in the houses of others is Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr ibn Yūnus al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 691). She studied the *Ḥadīth Quss Sā‘idah al-Tyāḍī* in the narration of Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Mu‘addil al-Rāzī (d. 525), with Ja‘far ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥibatillāh al-Hamadānī. in

¹ *Ibid.*, 142, 149. ² *Ibid.*, 67–68, 149. ³ *Ibid.*, 57, 61. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 106–07.

the house of Ibn al-Hilāl in 635.¹ Another example is ‘Adliyyah bint Abī Bakr ibn ‘Ā’idh, the grandmother of Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-‘Aqrabānī. She studied *Forty Ḥadīths* of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aslam ibn Sālīm al-Kindī al-Ṭūsī (d. 242) with Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ḥazm in the house of a fellow-student, Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Sālīm al-Khabbāz.² Sometimes student and teacher were both women and the teacher’s house was the venue: for example, Khātūn bint ‘Abdillāh studied the sixth part of *al-Fawā’id al-Muntaqāh al-gharā’ib ‘an al-shuyūkh al-‘awālī*, narrated by Abī Ṭāhir Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mukhalliṣ, selected by Abū l-Faṭḥ ibn Abī l-Fawāris, with the aged shaykhah Umm al-Fityān Ḥantamah bint al-Shaykh Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Mufarrij ibn ‘Alī ibn Maslamah (d. ca. 630) in her house in Damascus in 628.³ Then again the class might be held in a house other than that of either student or teacher: for example, Āminah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Rājih studied *Amālī Abī Bakr Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn al-Ḥārith al-Bāghindī al-Wāsiṭī* with Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Hadiyyah bint ‘Alī ibn ‘Askar al-Baghdādī (d. 712) and Sa‘d al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Maqdisī (d. 721) in the house of Shaykh Shams al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Umar Ibn ‘Iwād al-Maqdisī in 710.⁴

The scale of the women’s efforts with ḥadīth study in private homes may be gauged from the list transcribed below of the women who, with Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān ibn Abī l-Ḥasan al-Dimashqī, were teaching a very large class in the house in Damascus of Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn in 627. The class was on some of the ḥadīths of al-Dibājī and others.⁵ Most of the teachers were women – it is likely, as the names show, that they were family of the house-owner. I have not transcribed the

¹ *Ibid.*, 75, 216. ² *Ibid.*, 140, 418. ³ ŠĀLIḤ IBN GHĀLIB IBN ‘ALĪ, *‘al-Fawā’id al-muntaqāh al-gharā’ib ‘an al-shuyūkh al-‘awālī*, *Muqaddimah*. ⁴ *samā‘āt* at the end of *Sittah majālis min Amālī al-Bāghindī*, 220. ⁵ MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤAFĪZ, *al-Madrasah al-‘Umarīyah*, 131.

names of the students (there are too many), but I counted among them 24 women. A copy of the document itself is on the following page.

Umm Aḥmad Amīnah	Umm Sulaymān ʿĀʾishah
Umm ʿAbdillāh Khadījah bt.	Umm Aḥmad Ṣafīyyah and
Shaykh Abī ʿUmar b.	Umm Muḥammad Fāṭimah
Qudāmah	bt. Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn
Umm Ḥamzah Sārah bt.	b. Qudāmah
ʿUbaydillāh b. Aḥmad b.	Umm Aḥmad Ṣafīyyah bt.
Muḥammad b. Qudāmah	Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b.
Umm Ibrāhīm ʿAzīziyyah bt.	Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b.
ʿAbd al-Hādī b. Yūsuf b.	Qudāmah
Muḥammad b. Qudāmah	Umm ʿAbdillāh Āsiyah and
Umm Ibrāhīm Āsiyah bt.	Umm Muḥammad Fāṭimah
Shujah	bt. Muḥammad b. Khalf b.
Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bt.	Rajih
Aḥmad b. Ubaydullah b.	Umm ʿUmar Fāṭimah bt. ʿAbd
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b.	al-Dāʾim b. Niʿmah
Qudāmah	Umm Muḥammad Zaynab
Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥīm bint	and Umm Aḥmad Āsiyah
ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-	bt. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid b. Aḥmad
Wāḥid al-Maqdisī	b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b.
Umm Muḥammad Ṣafīyyah	Ismāʿīl b. Manṣūr
and Umm Muḥammad	Umm Aḥmad Zaynab and
Zaynab bt. Muḥammad b.	Umm ʿAbdillāh Fāṭimah bt.
Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd b. ʿAbdillāh	Makkī b. ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī
al-Maqdisī	Umm Muḥammad Ṣafīyyah
Umm ʿAbd al-Raḥīm bt. ʿAbd	and Umm Muḥammad
al-Raḥīm b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid	Zaynab bt. Muḥammad b.
al-Maqdisī	Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd b. ʿAbdillāh
	al-Maqdisī

Names of women teachers, extracted and transcribed
from the *samāʿ*^c shown on the next page.

Mosques

Since the beginning of Islam mosques have had a central role in the transmission of knowledge and, formally and informally, served as schools for the community.¹ The Prophet's mosque in Madinah was the first madrasa in Muslim history. The Companions taught in the main mosques in Makkah, Madinah, Kufah, Basrah, Damascus, Jerusalem and Egypt. After them, the Successors did the same. Later Abū Ḥanīfah, his students and others scholars did likewise. Sometimes in a single mosque many teachers would hold classes, each at a different pillar of the mosque. Particularly well-known and revered teachers attracted huge numbers of students.²

Women attended the mosques as the men attended. Hind bint Usayd ibn Hudayr al-Anṣāriyyah learnt sūrah *Qāf* from hearing the Prophet recite it in the prayer. Ibn Jābir and 'Uthmān ibn Abī l-ʿĀtikah say: 'Umm al-Dardā' was an orphan under the guardianship of Abū l-Dardā'; she used to come to the mosques with Abū l-Dardā' in two garments [i.e. her head was not covered] and she prayed in the men's rows, and used to sit in the circles of the teachers learning the Qur'ān, until Abū l-Dardā' asked her one day to join the women's rows.³

One of the famous mosques where women regularly attended ḥadīth classes was Jāmi' al-Ḥanābilah, also known as al-Jāmi' al-Muẓaffarī in Ṣālihiyyah in Qāsyūn, Damascus. The building of the mosque started in 598. Dr. Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiẓ has written a 720-page history of this mosque,⁴ including in it records of the ḥadīth classes held there, with the names of

¹This is true of all communities, mainstream and minorities; for an interesting account of the use of mosques by women of the Ibbādī tradition, see Muḥammad 'Alī DABŪZ, *Ta'rīkh al-maghrib al-kabīr*, 406–07, and Badriyyah bint Hamad AL-SHAQSIYYAH, *al-Sīrah al-ṣakīyyah li-l-mar'ah al-Ibbādīyyah*, 21. ²For examples, see 'AJJĀJ AL-KHAṬĪB, *Uṣūl al-ḥadīth*, 145. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *al-Ta'rīkh al-ṣaghīr*, i. 193; AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, iv. 278. ⁴MUṬĪ' AL-ḤĀFIẒ, *Jāmi' al-Ḥanābilah al-Muẓaffarī* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyyah, in 1423/2002). (See photo, p. 96 below.)

the many women who studied different compilations of ḥadīth. Another prestigious teaching venue was the great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus: here too women students attended the same classes as men. For example: Asmā' bint Aḥmad ibn 'Alam ibn Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Ḥarrānī studied, in a class of 20, *al-Majālis al-khamsah* of Abū Ṭāhir Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Silafī al-Aṣbahānī (d. 576) with Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Abī l-Faḍl ibn Naṣr al-Ḥamawī 'Diyā' al-Dīn in al-Jāmi' al-Amawī in 724;¹ Qaṭlū al-Rūmiyyah studied, in a class of 43, the third part of *K. al-Qadā'* of Abū l-Ḥārith Surayj ibn Yūnus ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shu'ayh al-Balkhī (d. 235) with four teachers – Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn al-Zakī 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yūsuf al-Mizzī, 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ghanā'im al-Muhandis and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Raqqī in al-Jāmi' al-Amawī in 733.²

Another important mosque where women attended ḥadīth classes was the Jāmi' of Bayt al-Abbar (Syria). An example is Ruqayyah bint Dāwūd ibn 'Umar ibn Yūsuf ibn Yaḥyā al-Shāfi'i, who studied – in a class of 22 – *K. al-Karam wa-l-jūd wa sakḥā al-nufūs* of Abū Shaykh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Barjalānī (d. 238) with Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Musallam ibn Salmān al-Irbālī, in 631.³

Schools

Women also attended ḥadīth classes in schools. The registers of attendance show that most such classes were attended by male and female students together, and their teachers, sometimes of the same class, were likewise both male and female.

Among the famous schools where the women attended ḥadīth classes in large numbers was al-Madrasah al-'Umariyyah, founded by Shaykh Abū 'Umar al-Maqdisī in 557 in Ṣāliḥiyyah in Damascus. Registers of attendance at this school have been

¹ LEDER *et al.*, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 307, 106. ² *Ibid.*, 93, 478.

³ *Ibid.*, 106, 307.

compiled in the history of it by Dr. Muḥammad Muṭī^c al-Ḥāfiẓ. Among the earliest documents relates to the year 604, when the famous teacher of ḥadīth Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Ṭabrazad taught several books of ḥadīth including *Amālī al-Qāḍī Abī Ya‘lā al-Farrā’*. The class was attended by Khadījah bint al-Shaykh al-‘Imād Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisiyyah and other women in a class of 124 students.¹

Another famous Damascus school of ḥadīth was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūriyyah, where the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Āminah bint al-Imām al-Zāhid Taqī al-Dīn Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Faḍl al-Wāsiṭiyyah studied *K. Tuḥfah ‘Id al-Fitr* of Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Shāḥḥāmī al-Mu‘addil (d. 533) and *Ḥadīth Abū Ṭāhir al-Ziyādī* with ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Dāwūd ibn al-‘Aṭṭār al-Dimashqī in 724.²

Equally prestigious was al-Madrasah al-Murshidiyyah, where Asmā’ bint Aḥmad ibn ‘Ālam ibn Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar al-Ḥarrānī studied *Majlis al-Biṭāqah* of Ḥamzah al-Kinānī (d. 357) with three great teachers of ḥadīth: the sultan Asad al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ayyūbī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abī l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Dāwūd al-Jazarī al-Kurdī, and ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Raḍī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Maqdisī in 733.³

In another school, the Madrasah al-Mismāriyyah Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr ibn Ḥamzah al-Mardāwī studied, in a class of 19, *Ḥadīth Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Shirāzī*, in 688 – her teacher was Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrānī (d. 688).⁴

In the sixth century, perhaps the most important centre in Damascus for learning ḥadīth was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyyah, where, later on, renowned scholars like Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī (d. 742) would teach. Women also attended classes there in large number. For example, Asmā’ bint al-Imām Taqī al-Dīn

¹*Ibid.*, 138, 289. ²*Ibid.*, 125, 149. ³*samā‘āt* in *Majlis al-Biṭāqah* from *Amālī Ḥamzah al-Kinānī*, MS Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyyah, Damascus. ⁴LEDER *et al.*, *Mu‘jam al-samā‘āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 50, 215.

Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Jābir studied in a class of 28 the *Forty Ḥadīths* of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān ibn ‘Āmir al-Shaybānī (d. 303), with the head of the school, Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ḥajjāj Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī in 741.¹

Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ḍiyā’iyyah was another school of ḥadīth in Damascus. Here Shaykhah Asmā’ bint Muḥammad ibn al-Kamāl ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisiyyah studied, in a class of 34, *Amālī al-Naqqāsh* with the most famous teacher of ḥadīth at that time, Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Bukhārī in 660.²

WAYS OF RECEIVING ḤADĪTH

Ḥadīth experts distinguish eight ways of receiving a ḥadīth, with corresponding formulas that should prefix the transmission of the ḥadīth to someone else. Women made as good use of each of these eight ways as did men:

1 *Samā’* (hearing)

The high tradition has been to hear the ḥadīth, together with the chain of narrators connecting it to the Prophet, spoken by the teacher. About *samā’*, hearing the words of the teacher spoken from memory or from the teacher’s book, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: “This type is the highest of all according to the majority of the scholars. Whoever hears from the shaykh, he can say: “I heard (*sami‘tu*) so-and-so say” or “he narrated to me (*ḥadath-ni*)” or “he narrated to us” or “he informed us (*akhbar-nā*)” or “he provided to us information (*anbā’-nā*)”.³ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī affirms, from this range of expressions, that ‘the highest expression is to say: “I heard”.⁴

When reliable books of ḥadīths were compiled, people started ‘hearing’ these books from their teachers, with the chain of authority going back to the authors of these books and from them to the Prophet. This way has continued to our time.

¹*Ibid.*, 64, 216. ²*Ibid.*, 111, 216. ³IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 80. ⁴AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 283.

Whether the books are small or large, the originals of the books (manuscripts) have a chain of references, starting with copyist(s) of the particular work and ending with its author(s); most also have an appendix documenting the occasions of *samāʿ* with a list of those who attended. It is from such documentation that one realizes how commonly women attended these occasions, and often children also.

It was a controversy among scholars whether or at what age children could be counted as having 'heard' and therefore qualified to transmit ḥadīth. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī discusses the controversy in detail and then concludes: 'The majority of scholars hold that hearing of ḥadīth is allowed even for those who are less than this age [five]. And that is the correct opinion according to us.'¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: 'What the practice of the later people of ḥadīth has been established on [i.e. the general rule for them] is that they write for a five-year-old or more that "he heard" and for less than five that "he attended or he was brought [to the assembly]"'. What is proper in [this matter] is that the condition of each [individual] child be examined: if we find him above the condition of one who does not comprehend what is said, we will validate his hearing [...]' Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ then gives an example of someone who narrated what he heard when he was a child, was questioned about it, and his account of what he understood not found wanting.²

ʿĀ'ishah was certainly what we would call a child prodigy, and so her hearing of ḥadīths as a young girl³ may be considered out of the ordinary. But the examples of young girls listening to ḥadīth and attending assemblies for that purpose, specially in the later centuries, are plentiful.

2 *al-ʿArḍ*

The term *al-ʿarḍ* (literally, 'offering') refers to reading out the text to the teacher. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: 'It is the same whether you read out, or someone else reads and you are hearing [it being

¹*Ibid.*, 54–56. ²IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 79. ³AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 58.

read out], or whether you hear [it being read out] from a book or from your memory, or whether the shaykh knows by heart what is being read out to him or he does not know but is [himself] holding his original or another reliable person in the class is holding it.¹ Al-Khaṭīb says: ‘Most *fuqahā*’ and all the imāms of the knowledge [i.e. ḥadīth] and *āthār* hold that reading to the teacher is like hearing from him.² Imāms Mālik ibn Anas and Sufyān al-Thawrī also considered the reading by the teacher or the reading to him as the same.³

The best and most usual expression to indicate reception through ‘*arḍ*’ is to say: ‘I read to so-and-so’; or ‘it was read to so-and-so and I was hearing and he approved it’. One may also use the same expression as for *samā‘* on condition of proper clarification: ‘He narrated to us by our reading to him’ or ‘he informed us by our reading to him’.⁴ In later periods people used ‘he narrated to us’ for *samā‘* and ‘he informed us’ for ‘*arḍ*’. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ cites Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Tamīmī al-Jawharī as saying: ‘This is the opinion of most people of ḥadīth, whose number cannot be counted. They made “he informed us” an indicator of saying “I read to him”’.⁵

3 *Ijāzah*

Ijāzah is the teacher’s formal permission to someone to narrate from him all of his narrations or his writings. The *ijāzah* can be of several kinds. (a) The teacher gives permission to a specified person for a specified thing, with words to the effect that ‘I have given you permission [to transmit] such-and-such a book or what is contained in my list’. This is the highest type of *ijāzah*, and the later scholars are unanimous in allowing it.⁶

(b) The teacher gives permission to a specified person for an unspecified thing, meaning: ‘I have permitted to you all my narrations.’ The majority among traditionists and jurists allow it.⁷

¹IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 82. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 259–60. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ‘*Ilm*, bāb *mā jā’a fī l-‘ilm*. ⁴IBN AL-ṢALĀḤ, *Muqaddimah*, 83. ⁵*Ibid.* ⁶*Ibid.*, 90–92. ⁷*Ibid.*, 92.

(c) That the teacher gives permission without specifying who or what is permitted; something like: 'I have given permission to all Muslims, or to everyone who has lived [and so could have heard from me] within my lifetime.' This kind of *ijāzah āmmah* is disputed and usually disallowed without some limiting attribute.¹

About *ijāzahs* in general, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says: 'The people differ regarding *ijāzah* of ḥadīths. Some of them allow it, others do not. Those who accept it are more numerous. Then, of those who accept it, some differ regarding the obligation to act upon those ḥadīths [that have reached them in this way]. The Zāhirīs and some later scholars hold that it is not obligatory to act upon the contents of these ḥadīths because they are like unconnected chains, or they are like narrations from obscure people. The majority of the scholars say that it is obligatory to act upon them.'²

4 *al-Munāwalah*

Munāwalah (presentation) is that the teacher hands his original or what is in its place, to the student, or the student brings the original to the teacher, who then says words to the effect: 'This is my ḥadīth or my book, so narrate it'. The condition is that the teacher transfers control, either by making the student the new owner or by lending the text to him so he can copy from it and compare with it. The majority of earlier and later people affirm that it is not allowed, for narrating ḥadīths got through *munāwalah*, to use 'he narrated to us' or 'he informed us', unless the terms are sufficiently defined. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: 'The correct and chosen opinion, on which the practice of the majority of scholars is [based] – and it is preferred by the people of piety and accuracy – is that they disallow using the expressions "he narrated to us" or "informed us" or similar to that, unconditionally. Rather, one should detail it, so he should say, "So-and-so has informed us through *munāwalah* or *ijāzah*" or like that.'³

¹ *Ibid.* ² AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 311. ³ *Ibid.*, 101.

5 *al-Mukātabah*

The term *mukātabah* means correspondence whereby the teacher transmits a written copy of his ḥadīth to the student; if combined with explicit permission to narrate the ḥadīth from him, it becomes like an *ijāzah*.¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says: ‘Many great scholars of ḥadīth like Layth ibn Sa‘d and Maṣṣūr allow in *mukātabah* use of the expression “he narrated to us” or “he informed us”. But the preferred way is of those who say “So-and-so wrote to me”. This is the correct way and appropriate to the people of caution. Similarly if he says “he informed [us] by writing”.² An early example of a woman’s using correspondence is Umm ‘Abdillāh bint Abī Hāshim. She wrote to the Companion, al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr (d. 65) asking him what had passed on the tongue of Zayd ibn Khārījāh in his last moments of life. In effect she was asking for a report of what al-Nu‘mān ibn Bashīr ‘heard’, and he wrote her a detailed letter in reply.³

6 *al-I‘lām*

The term *i‘lām* is used where the teacher informs the student that this ḥadīth or this book is his hearing or narration from so-and-so without explicitly permitting that student to narrate it further.⁴ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ says, after mentioning the difference of opinion among scholars about this: ‘The preferred opinion is what has been mentioned by many scholars of ḥadīth that narration of [ḥadīth received like] that is not allowed.’⁵

7 *al-Waṣiyyah*

Waṣiyyah is when the shaykh by a will at the time of his death or by other writing consigns his original(s) to a specific individual. Some scholars have allowed narration on the authority of a *waṣiyyah*, but the majority, in the absence of explicit permission (i.e. an *ijāzah*) from the shaykh, do not allow it.⁶

¹*Ibid.*, 103. ²*Ibid.*, 104. ³Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī al-Ma‘āfirī, *al-Hadā’iq al-ghannā’ fī akhbār al-nisā’*, 83–84. ⁴Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimah*, 104. ⁵*Ibid.*, 105. ⁶*Ibid.*, 105–06.

8 *al-Wijādah*

Wijādah (literally, ‘finding’) is a person’s discovering a ḥadīth or book, recognizing its author by the handwriting, then saying: ‘I found in the handwriting of So-and-so...’ In this case he is not allowed to use the expression ‘So-and-so informed us’ unless he has an *ijāzah*.¹ An example of *wijādah*, from the time of the Companions’ Successors, is that Hammām ibn Yaḥyā narrated that the mother of Sulaymān al-Yashkurī brought out his book, and it was read out to Thābit, Qatādah, Abū Bishr, al-Ḥasan and Muṭarrif. Then they, except for Thābit, narrated the whole of that; Thābit narrated from it only one ḥadīth.² Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Ibrāhīm al-Shāfi‘ī says: Samānah bint Hamdān narrated to me saying: ‘I found in the book of my grandfather al-Waḍḍāḥ ibn Ḥassān, where he says: ‘Amr ibn Shimar has narrated to us from Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, from ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn, from Jābir ibn ‘Abdillāh, that when the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – sat down on the pulpit he would say...’³

Documentation of the samā‘ and ijāzah

It has long been an established tradition among the scholars of ḥadīth to preserve *samā‘*s and *ijāzah*s. These documents are a precious resource. The *samā‘*s, typically found appended to the book or written into its margins, contain a statement of the date and venue of the assembly, the name of the person(s) keeping the record and other details; description(s) of the teacher(s), a list of those who attended with their titles, *kunyabs*, names and genealogy; also comments such as who and how many attended all the sessions in a course of study without missing any, those who missed something, even those who were dozing or talking in class. The reproductions should give some idea of what these *samā‘*s look like; they vary greatly in style, some being very formal and written in an accomplished

¹*Ibid.*, 106. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 354. ³*Id.*, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 440–41.

hand, others in the style of notes squeezed in where place could be found and less easy to read.

To get an *ijāzah* a common practice was to circulate a formal letter of request or *istid‘ā’*. Below, I give partial translation of two *samā‘*s mentioning the shaykhah, Umm Muḥammad Āminah bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsiṭiyyah; in one, she is recorded as *attending*, the other as *hearing*. She was born in about 664.¹

She attended, when she was three years old, a class on *Forty Ḥadīths* of ‘Abd al-Khālīq ibn Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Shahḥāmī (d. 549), compiled by ‘Alī al-Shahrastānī, with the shaykh, Badr al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Sa‘d ibn Aḥmad al-Kirmānī al-Naysābūrī, who heard the book from Abū Bakr al-Qāsim ibn Abī Sa‘d al-Saffār, in al-Jāmi‘ al-Muzaḥḥarī in Mt. Qāsyūn on Saturday 25 Ṣafar 667 with the reading of Najm al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yahyā al-Shaqrāwī, and he gave her permission.²

She heard *Juz’ Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq* from her father Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Alī Aḥmad ibn Faḍl al-Wāsiṭī, by his hearing from al-Shaykh Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Barākāt ibn Abī l-Sa‘ādāt al-Harīmī, by his narration from Abū Shākir Yahyā ibn Yūsuf al-Saqlātūnī, by his hearing from Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Shādhān al-Baghdādī al-Bazzāz, from Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Sammāk, from Abū ‘Alī Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq al-Shaybānī. That was on Sunday 17 Jumādā al-Ūlā 673 at the house of the shaykh in Mt. Qāsyūn in Damascus.²

In both translations above, the names of others attending the class are omitted. Next, translation of an *istid‘ā’* and *ijāzah* document (see photocopy on the next page):³

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

It is requested from the favour of the master of the people of ḥadīth, – may God increase their number – to grant *ijāzah* to the *faqīh* Abū ‘Umar Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah, for his

¹IBN RĀFI‘, *al-Wafayāt*, i. 343. ²*samā‘āt* in *al-Arba‘ūn* of ‘Abd al-Khālīq ibn Zāhir al-Shahḥāmī, *takhrīj* al-Sharastānī, MS Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyyah, Damascus. ³*samā‘āt* at the end of *Juz’ Ḥanbal*. ³Translated from the photocopy of the *ijāzah* in MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Madrasah al-‘Umarīyyah*, 97.

son ‘Abdullāh, his daughter Zaynab, the son of his son Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar, for Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Rājiḥ ibn Bilāl ibn ‘Īsā, for his son Abū l-Faṭḥ Aḥmad, daughter of Āsiyah, and for their mother Āminah bint Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah, for all the ḥadīths that they received by hearing and then received by *ijāzah*, and the rest of what is allowed for them to narrate, without them [the shaykhs, giving permission and] being responsible for whatever invalidates the *ijāzah*. May they continue doing service [to the people]. Written in the last ten [days] of Ṣafar in 579. And praise is due to God alone, and His Mercy on Muḥammad the Prophet and His peace.

Istid‘ā and first words of the *ijāzah* translated above. (Detail of p. 97 MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤAFĪZ, *al-Madrasah al-‘Umarīyyah*.)

I have given them *ijāzah*, may God guide them to His obedience, in all that they asked *ijāzah* for, after avoiding what can weaken an *ijāzah*. May God guide us and them to what pleases Him. Written by Muḥammad ibn Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ṣaqr on 24 Ṣafar, 579 in Damascus, while praising God, Glorified is He, and praying for mercy and peace on our master Muḥammad, his family and his Companions.

Like that I [too] say [that] I have given them – may God increase their number, and guide them [to] what pleases Him in this world and the next world – permission for all my *masmū‘āt* and *ijāzāt* on the way of the *salaf*, may God have mercy on them. It is written by Barākāt ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ṭāhir ibn Barākāt al-Khushū‘ī al-Qurashī. That was on Wednesday 12 Rabi‘ al-Ākhir 579.

Querying *ijāzahs*

The scholars discussed and queried *ijāzahs* both assiduously and responsibly. They did not allow narration unless the *ijāzah* was confirmed. Here is an example:

The great scholar of ḥadīth Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Ya‘murī ibn Sayyid al-Nās [d. 734] was asked: Who gave *ijāzah* to Ruqayyah bint Ismā‘īl ibn al-Anmāṭī [d. 676]?

Then he answered: As for Ruqayyah bint Ismā‘īl al-Anmāṭī, I have got some *ijāzahs* with her father’s handwriting in the year 612 and around that [year]. In none of these *ijāzahs*, is she mentioned. Rather in those *ijāzahs* are mentioned her brother Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl al-Anmāṭī, our Shaykh and his sister Zaynab. There are *ijāzahs* of the year 614 where she [i.e. Ruqayyah] is mentioned. That means she was born around that time. And I have seen in the handwriting of ‘Īsā al-Anmāṭī [so] that I do not have any doubt of it:

‘It is requested from the masters, the imāms, to grant *ijāzah* for the people for whom the *ijāzah* is requested in the page opposite to this, and for Ruqayyah bint Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anmāṭī. Everyone narrates all that is valid from their narration and words, and for them is the reward.’

It was dated at the end of Jumāda al-Ūlā year 614, and similarly, they grant *ijāzah* to Ṣāfi and Jumū‘ah, both brothers and slaves of Ibn al-Anmāṭī with the group, whatever has been asked for, according to the conditions of *ijāzah*. May God benefit all thereby. Amen. Below that is:

‘I gave them *ijāzah*, may God guide them, to narrate what they have asked with the condition of its validity. Written by ‘Abd al-Ṣamad ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Faḍl al-Anṣārī.’

Below that is:

Like that says Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullāh, ibn Muḥammad ibn Mu‘ammil al-Shīrāzī on 26 Muḥarram year 615 in Damascus.

Then Abū l-Faṭḥ ibn Sayyid al-Nās records other *ijāzahs* for Ruqayyah with full documentation and dates to make it clear that she had *ijāzah* from those shaykhs.¹

¹Muḥammad AL-RĀWANDĪ, *Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Ya‘murī al-Ajwibah*, ii. 229–32.

FĀṬIMAH BINT SA'D AL-KHAYR (ʔ525–600)

Fāṭimah's father, Sa'd al-Khayr, was himself a scholar. One of his eminent students, al-Sam'ānī (author of *al-Ansāb*), describes him as *muḥaddith*, *faqīh*, and righteous. He travelled from his home-city of Valencia, at the western end of the Islamic world, all the way to China. The reason for his migration is not given. It is most probable that as Muslim power in Spain waned further, Christian rulers were emboldened to make life for their Muslim subjects increasingly intolerable and for learned, pious Muslims impossible. Al-Sam'ānī¹ says that Sa'd al-Khayr faced much hardship, crossed many seas and, through trade, attained considerable wealth. He studied with many teachers in Baghdad, Isfahan, Hamadan and other places. He had several daughters (then, much later, a son) and was most particular about their attending ḥadīth classes, travelling with them extensively and repeatedly to different teachers. He also taught them himself.

Fāṭimah's year of birth is given as 525; 522 is more likely.² The place is given only as 'in China', i.e. east of Kashghar. She began very young: a *samā'* records her hearing al-Darāqutnī's *K. al-Du'afā al-matrūkīn* in Dhū l-Qa'dah 529; a *samā'* at the end of a copy of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's *al-Jāmi' li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmi'* records her hearing it in Rabī' al-Awwal and Rabī' al-Ākhir 529. Al-Mundhirī notes that Sa'd al-Khayr took her several times to the same teachers to consolidate her knowledge.³

In Isfahan she studied with Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah, main narrator in her time of the compilations of al-Ṭabarānī. Fāṭimah Sa'd al-Khayr heard from her all of *Mu'jam al-kabīr* (printed now in 37 volumes) and *Mu'jam al-ṣaghīr* (2 volumes).

¹ AL-SAM'ĀNĪ, *al-Ansāb*, in loco 'al-balansī'. ² IBN NUQTĀH, *al-Taḡyīd*, 409.

³ AL-MUNDHIRĪ, *Takmilah*, ii. 15.

The map illustrates the vast Islamic Empire and its extensive trade network. Major trade routes are shown as thick black lines, while the study journeys of Fa'imah bint Sa'd al-Khayr are indicated by thinner lines with arrows. The map includes the following locations and features:

- Major Trade Routes:**
 - Land Routes:** Connect the Mediterranean Sea (via Constantinople, Alexandria, Cairo, Fayyum, Tinnis, Jerusalem, Damascus, Baghdad, Kufah, Basrah, Shiraz, Isfahan, Rayy, Hamadan, Qazwin, Urmah, Tibriz, Tashus, Aleppo, Hims, Marda, Nabulus, Beirut, Tripoli, Harran, Mosul, Erbil, Qaswin) to the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Another route connects the Caspian Sea (via Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, Nishapur, Tus, Ghur, Herat, Merv Rud, Balkh, Kabul, Ghazna) to the Indian Ocean.
 - Sea Routes:** Connect the Mediterranean Sea (via Alexandria, Cairo, Fayyum, Tinnis, Jerusalem, Damascus, Baghdad, Kufah, Basrah, Shiraz, Isfahan, Rayy, Hamadan, Qazwin, Urmah, Tibriz, Tashus, Aleppo, Hims, Marda, Nabulus, Beirut, Tripoli, Harran, Mosul, Erbil, Qaswin) to the Red Sea (via Jeddah, Makkah, Madinah, Muscat, Daybul) and the Arabian Sea.
- Study Journeys of Fa'imah bint Sa'd al-Khayr:**
 - Her teachers:** Indicated by arrows pointing from the Mediterranean Sea region towards the Red Sea region.
 - Her students:** Indicated by arrows pointing from the Red Sea region back towards the Mediterranean Sea region.
- Geographical Features:**
 - Seas:** Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean.
 - Gulf:** The Gulf (Persian Gulf).
 - Rivers:** Nile, Tigris, Euphrates.
- Scale:**
 - Miles: 0, 200, 400, 600, 800.
 - Kilometres: 0, 200, 400, 600, 800.

In Baghdad, where it appears she was settled for a time, among her principal teachers were Abū l-Qāsim Ḥibatullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn, main narrator of Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*, Abū l-Qāsim Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Shahḥāmī, Abū Ghālib Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Bannā', and others travelling to the capital. The list of the books she mastered would be long indeed. After marriage, she moved with her husband to Damascus and from there to Cairo.¹ Much of her teaching career was based in those two cities, and many scholars travelled there expressly to study with her.

Fāṭimah married Zayn al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibrāhīm ibn Najā, one of her father's students who clearly impressed. He was born in Damascus in 508, and described as pious, noble, high-minded, of praiseworthy character, exceptionally eloquent. He was called *al-Wā'iḡ* for his fame as a preacher, and *al-Ra'īs* for the social standing he enjoyed through relations with the Ayyubid court: he served as secretary for Nūr al-Dīn. The historian Abū Shāmā records that he was held in high esteem by both Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (famous for recovering Jerusalem) and his successor. Yet, despite the great wealth that had come to him, al-Dhahabī reports that Ibn Najā, died so poor that his friends paid for his shroud.² There is no account of how he unburdened himself of so vast a fortune. Perhaps he was very generous in giving it away and successfully concealed the fact. He died in 599, a year before Fāṭimah.

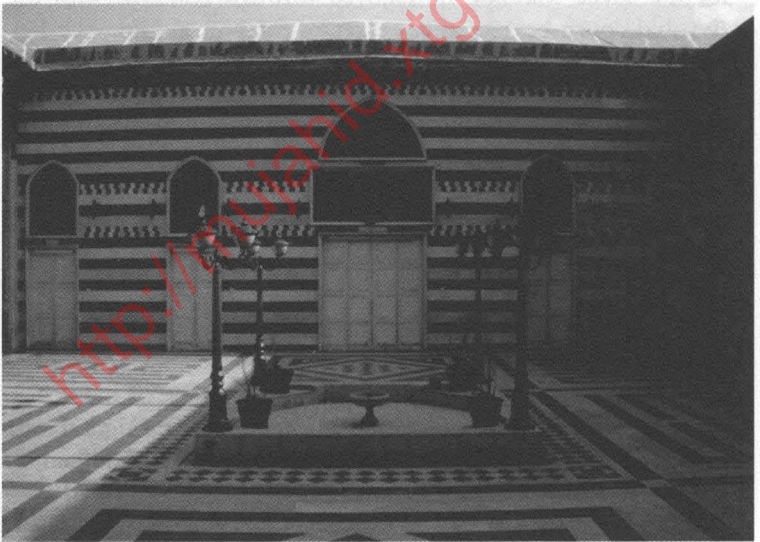
Al-Dhahabī says: 'She saw much honour and wealth.' Yet, neither father, nor husband, nor Fāṭimah herself appear to have been distracted by that wealth into any indiscipline or indolence. To the end of her life, she remained active in diffusing her vast body of knowledge. Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl, later famed as Khaṭīb Mardā, carried to his home city her teaching of *Musnad Abī Ya'la*,³ *Ḥadīth al-Khiraqī*,⁴ *Ziyādāt Amālī Imām Mālik*,⁵ and

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām* (sub anno 591–600), 461. ²Id., *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, xxi. 393–96. ³IBN HAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 482–83.

⁴*Ibid.*, i. 263. ⁵*Ibid.*, ii. 114.

other works. Ismā'īl ibn 'Azzūn¹ read with her al-Ṭabarānī's *Muḥjam al-kabīr*, as did Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī,² who carried it to Damascus. 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn 'Allāq studied with her *Ḥadīth al-Qudūrī*,³ *Fawā'id Abū Naṣr*,⁴ and *Juz' al-Ghīrī*.⁵ His home-city was in Egypt. Her knowledge of ḥadīth passed to Tinnīs in Egypt through Abū l-Qāsim ibn Ḥusayn al-Qurashī al-Tinnīsī;⁶ to Hamadan through the jurist Abū Muḥammad Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadānī; through Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Qāsim al-Jītī to Jīt (near Nablus).⁷ It is not practical to try to list here all her students or all the places they came from and returned to with her teaching. The entry for Fāṭimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr in the Dictionary that I have compiled of the *Muḥaddithāt* runs to 20 pages.

She died in Cairo in the year 600, at the age of 78. She was buried below the mountain called Muqattam.⁸



Courtyard, al-Jāmi' al-Ḥanābilah al-Muẓaffarī, Damascus.
(Photo: Yahya Michot)

¹*Ibid.* ²*Ibid.*, ii. 383–84. ³*Ibid.*, i. 322. ⁴*Ibid.*, i. 329. ⁵*Ibid.*, ii. 212. ⁶AL-MUNDHIRI, *Takmilah*, ii. 50. ⁷*Ibid.*, iii. 283. ⁸*Ibid.*, ii. 14.

Chapter 4

The women's teachers

The women were not restricted to learning from only other women. It appears rather that they studied with whoever they had the opportunity to study with. The minimum required of women in looking for teachers is well set out by Ibn al-Jawzī. He says:

The woman has [the same] duty as the man; so it is [incumbent] upon her to learn about her duties and obligations until she is firm and sure how to perform them. If she has a father or brother, or husband or any blood relation who can teach her the obligations of the religion and instruct her in how to do her duties, that will suffice her. If there is no one there [among close family] she must ask others [outside the family] and learn from them. If she is able to find a woman who can teach her, she will learn from her. If not, she will learn from the old and elderly men without privacy: and she will suffice with what is necessary [for her to know]. [After that] whenever any new situation arises about her religion she should ask and not be shy; for God does not shy from the truth.¹

For women who desired to go further or to specialize, it was permitted to study with younger teachers if the teaching was done in an open way, within the Shari'ah bounds. Typically, the women would begin with the knowledgeable women or men of the household, then continue with local teachers outside the family circle, and then to such teachers as might be visiting the locality, and finally teachers in other towns and cities. Some details follow in the examples below. The examples have been

¹ IBN AL-JAWZĪ (d. 597), *Aḥkām al-nisā'*, 131.

chosen principally to demonstrate that this practice was consistent in all periods and in different regions.

TEACHERS WITHIN THE FAMILY CIRCLE

From the outset women learnt ḥadīth from their mothers – the Companions taught their daughters, who were their Successors. ‘Abd Rabbih ibn al-Ḥakam has narrated from the daughter of Ruqayqah from her mother that she said: ‘When the Prophet – *ṣalla-l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – came seeking victory at Tā’if, he came to me [...]’¹ and then she mentioned the whole ḥadīth. Ḥubābah bint ‘Ajlān also got ḥadīth from her mother: She has narrated from Ḥubābah bint ‘Ajlān from her mother, Umm Ḥafṣ, from Ṣafīyyah bint Jarīr, from Umm Ḥakīm bint Waddā‘ that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla-l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – saying: The prayer of a father passes the curtain’,² meaning that it reaches God directly, without being mediated or impeded. Similarly, in later centuries women learnt from their mothers: Alṭī bint Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad learnt ḥadīth from her mother, the great *muḥaddithah*, Umm Muḥammad ‘Ā’ishah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn ‘Īsā al-Ḥanafī (d. 793). One of the ḥadīth works that she studied with her was *Fawā’id* of Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥakīm (d. 378) in Muḥarram 793 in the Madrasah al-Khatūniyyah al-Burāniyyah.³

Among women from the earlier period who studied with their fathers are: Buhaysah al-Fuzāriyyah (*tābi‘iyyah*), who narrated from her father from the Prophet;⁴ Jabalah bint Muṣaffah al-‘Āmiriyyah (*tābi‘iyyah*), who narrated from her father from ‘Alī;⁵ and Ḥafṣah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq.⁶ In the later centuries: Hind bint Ja‘far ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq (5th c.)

¹ IBN AL-ATHĪR, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, v. 454. ² IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, Du‘ā’, bāb *da‘wat al-wālid wa da‘wat al-maḥlūm*. ³ See Abū Aḥmad AL-ḤAKIM, *Fawā’id* (*mā ittaṣala ilay-nā*), 100. ⁴ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 138. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *Tabdhīb al-tahdhīb*, xii. 434. ⁶ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 153.

studied with her father;¹ Umm Salamah Āminah studied with her father, Abū Saʿīd Ḥasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysābūrī (d. 348);² Waraʿ studied with her father Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (5th c.)³ Luʿluʾah studied the whole *al-Arbaʿīn ḥadīth min al-musāwāt mustakbrajah ʿan thiqāt al-ruwāt* of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ʿAsākir, with her famous father, Shaykh ʿImād al-Dīn ibn ʿAsākir al-Dimashqī in 718;⁴ Amat al-Raḥīm al-Yūnīniyyah (d. 739) studied the women's ḥadīth from *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal with her father, the great *muḥaddith* and jurist Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Yūnīnī (8th c.);⁵ in India the great scholar of ḥadīth and *fiqh*, Khadījah al-Dihlawiyyah (early 14th c.) studied ḥadīth and other subjects with her father, Imām Muḥammad Ishāq al-Dihlawī (d. 1262).

There are women who received knowledge of ḥadīth from their grandmothers. For example, Āminah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā narrated from her grandmother Umm Laylā that she said: 'We pledged allegiance to the Prophet – *ṣalla-l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam*.⁶ The *muḥaddithah* and jurist Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr got many ḥadīths from her grandmother Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr, which she then passed on to her students.⁷ A later *muḥaddithah*, Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn Ḥamzah al-Mardāwī studied *Ḥadīth Abū Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Shīrāzī* with her grandmother, Zaynab bint Makkī ibn ʿAlī ibn Kāmil al-Ḥarrānī (the teacher of al-Mizzī, Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Dhahabī) in Madrasah al-Mismariyyah in Jumādah al-Ūlā 688.⁸ She also studied other books with her.⁹ Umm al-Khayr bint ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Zāhirah al-Qurashī studied *Nuskhah Abī Muʿāwiyah*, *Nuskhah Bakkar ibn Qutaybah* and *al-Maṣābiḥ* of al-Baghawī

¹IBN ʿASĀKIR, *Taʾrīkh Dimashq, (tarājim al-nisāʾ)* 436. ²See the account of al-Ḥasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul in IBN AL-ʿADĪM, *Bughyat al-talab*, 2295–98. ³AL-DHAHABĪ, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 561–70)*, 402. ⁴See IBN ʿASĀKIR, *al-Arbaʿīn ḥadīth min al-musāwāt mustakbrajah ʿan al-ruwāt*, 228. ⁵AL-DHAHABĪ *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 189. ⁶IBN ḤIBBĀN, *K. al-Thiqāt*, iv. 63. ⁷*Ibid.*, v. 301. ⁸See LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-samāʿat al-Dimashqiyyah*, 50, 215. ⁹See *ibid.*, 139, 215.

(d. 494) with her maternal grandmother, Umm al-Ḥasan bint Aḥmad ibn Qāsim al-Ḥarāzī in Makkah in 762.¹

Among the women who received ḥadīth from their grandfathers is Munyah bint ʿUbayd ibn Abī Barazah al-Aslamī. Umm al-Aswad has narrated from Munyah bint ʿUbayd that she narrated from her grandfather Abū Barazah that he said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla-l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam* – said: Whoever consoles a woman who has lost her child, God will grant him a cloak to wear in paradise.'² Umm Abān Hind bin al-Wāzīʿ ibn Zārīʿ also received ḥadīth from her grandfather, the Companion, Zārīʿ ibn ʿĀmir al-ʿAbdī.³ Duḥaybah and Ṣafīyah, daughters of ʿUlaybah al-ʿAnbariyyah, got ḥadīth from their grandfather Ḥarmalah ibn ʿAbdillāh al-ʿAnbarī, a Companion, and also from their father's grandmother, Qaylah bint Makhrahmah, another Companion.⁴ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 690) studied a lot of books of ḥadīth with her grandfather Abū l-Ḥasan Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767, a teacher of al-Mizzī and Ibn Taymiyyah). Among the books she studied with him are: the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* of al-Bayhaqī and *Fawā'id Sammūyah*.⁵

Marriage did not stop women from continuing their study of the *Sunnah*. Indeed, some of them turned to their husbands to improve their store of knowledge (examples of husbands learning from wives will come in a later chapter). Buqayrah, wife of the great Companion Salmān al-Fārisī received and narrated ḥadīth from him.⁶ So also did Jumānah bint al-Musayyab ibn Najabah, wife of the Companion Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān.⁷ Similarly, Zaynab bint Ka'b ibn ʿUjrah, wife of the famous scholar among the Companions, Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, received ḥadīth from him, copiously recorded in the major

¹IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 1594. ²AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Sunan*, *Janā'iz*, bāb *ākhar fī fadl al-ta'ziyah*. ³IBN HAJAR, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, xii. 485. ⁴AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 168. ⁵TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, ii. 375. ⁶IBN SA'D, *al-Tabaqāt al-kubrā*, iv. 92. ⁷IBN MĀKŪLĀ (d. 475), *al-Ikmāl fī raf' al-irtiyāb*, ii. 532.

ḥadīth compilations.¹ Among the Successors, Umm al-Dardā' al-Ṣuḡhrā received many ḥadīths from her husband Abū l-Dardā'. Ṣafīyyah bint Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Makhzūmiyyah al-Makkiyyah heard directly from her husband *Musalsal bi-l-annwaliyyah*, in Rabī' al-Awwal 743.² Sitt al-Fuqahā' bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsiṭiyyah studied *Amālī Ibn Bishrān* of Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān (d. 430) with her husband Ḍiyā' al-Dīn 'Īsā ibn Abī Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Maghārī al-Ḥanbalī in Ribāṭ al-Qalānisī on 22 Ṣafar 703.³ Zaynab bint Ismā'īl ibn Aḥmad studied *Ḥadīth* of Abū 'Amr 'Uthmān ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī (d. 345) with her husband Qaḍī Taqī al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah al-Maqdisī in his house in 715.⁴ Dunyā bint Ḥasan ibn Balbān studied *Ḥadīth Abū Ḥusayn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Walīd al-Kilabī* (d. 396) with her husband the great *muḥaddith* and historian 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn al-Birzālī in 728.⁵

Women received ḥadīth also from other members of the family and household – brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, on the father's or the mother's side – and slaves received ḥadīth from their masters or mistresses. The great *muḥaddithah* and jurist, Umm Hudhayl Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn, sister of the renowned Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, received ḥadīth from her master Anas ibn Mālik.⁶ Hishām ibn Ḥassān from Iyās ibn Mu'āwiyah saying: 'I did not meet anyone whom I can prefer over Ḥafṣah'. He was asked: 'What about Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn?' He said: 'As for me I do not prefer anyone over her. She learnt the Qur'ān by heart when she was twelve years old.'⁷ Though born a slave, Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn made the best of the opportunity presented to her and became one of the most important scholars of her time. Some considered her superior to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Her ḥadīths from her master are in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. For

¹ IBN HAJAR, *al-Iṣābah fī l-tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah*, viii. 97. ² TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀṢĪ, *al-Iqd al-thamīn*, vi. 41. ³ See LEDER *et al.*, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimash-qīyyah*, 142, 319. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 110. 312. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 130, 304. ⁶ IBN ḤIBBĀN, *K. al-Thiqāt*, iv. 194. ⁷ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 152.

example, ‘Āṣim narrates from her from Anas that the Prophet said: ‘Plague is martyrdom for every Muslim.’¹

TEACHERS OF THE LOCALITY

After learning within the near circle, the women would study with other teachers in their town. Again, the example was set by the first generations of Muslims: the Successors in Madinah narrated from the Companions, including wives of the Prophet. Similarly, in every city where the Muslims settled, the women received knowledge of the *Sunnah* from the scholars in that locality. The first three centuries are full of examples, but here I will mention examples from the later centuries:

Jumuaḥ bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maḥmiyyah of Nishapur received the ḥadīth from the teachers of her town.² Shaykhah Asmā’ bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 595) studied ḥadīth with the judge of her home town Abū l-Mufaḍḍal Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Qurashī and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah al-Sulamī.³ Umm al-Rajā’ Zubaydah bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad of Isfahan studied ḥadīth with the teachers of her town, Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dhakwānī, Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl al-Thaqafī and Abū Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Aḥmad al-Simsār.⁴ The famous tenth century ḥadīth expert from Baghdad, Shuhdah bint al-Muḥaddith Abī Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj ibn ‘Umar al-Dīnawārī, studied ḥadīth with the famous teachers of Baghdad, Ṭirād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ibn Ṭalhah al-Nī‘ālī, Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Baṭir, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Yūsuf, al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn Salmān al-Daqqāq, Thābit Bundar, Abū Yāsir Aḥmad, Abū l-Wāḥid ibn ‘Alwān al-Shaybānī, Ja‘far al-Sarrāj, Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Harīṣah, Maṣṣūr ibn Ḥayd al-Naysābūrī, Abū l-Barakāt

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Ṭibb, bāb mā yudhkaru fī al-tā‘ūn*. ² AL-ṢAYRAFĪNĪ (d. 641), *al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li ta’rīkh Nasyābūr*, 183. ³ AL-MUNDHIRĪ, *al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqlah*, i. 314. ⁴ AL-SAM‘ĀNĪ, *al-Muntakhab min Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh*, iii. 1883.

Ḥamd ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Wakīl, Abū Ghālib al-Bāqillānī and a sizeable group of others.¹ Zāhidah bint Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mawsilī al-Khabbāz studied *Intikbāb al-Ṭabarānī li-ibni-hi ‘alā Ibn Fāris* with 21 teachers in 718.² ‘Ā’ishah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Maqdisī the great *muḥaddithah* of her time studied with Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *K. Dhamm al-kalām* of al-Harawī, *Juz’ Abī l-Jahm*, *Amālī Ibn al-Naṣrī*, *Musnad ‘Umar* of al-Najjād, *al-Arba‘ūn al-Ājurriyyah*, *Musnad ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd*; with Qādī Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn al-Hāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ghanī: *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*; with ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Mu‘azzam ‘Īsā al-Ayyūbī: the whole of the *Sīrah* by Ibn Ishāq in the rescension of Ibn Hishām, and *Juz’ al-Biṭāqah*.³

VISITING TEACHERS

Women also received ḥadīth from teachers visiting their towns. As before, the practice has the best precedent. On her way back from the Battle of the Camel, ‘Ā’ishah stayed as the guest of Ṣafiyyah bint al-Ḥārith al-‘Abdarī in the house of ‘Abdullāh ibn Khalaf in Basrah. Here Ṣafiyyah and other women of Basrah crowded round her to learn the *Sunnah* from her, and to put many questions of law, which she answered, and which are all well documented in the compilations of ḥadīth. Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, narrated from Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn that ‘Ā’ishah came down as a guest to Ṣafiyyah Umm Ṭalaḥah al-Ṭalaḥāt. On seeing Ṣafiyyah’s daughters ‘Ā’ishah said: ‘The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – entered and in my room there was a girl. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* – gave me a piece of material he had and asked me to make it into two pieces, and give one piece to this girl and give the other piece to the girl who is in the house of Umm Salamah, because they seem to be

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām*, (sub anno 571–580) 146. ²Their names can be found in MUTĪ‘ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Muḥaffarī*, 462. ³TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 381.

adults.¹ ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Ubayd, the *mu’adhdhin* of the mosque of Jurdān, narrated from ‘Udaysah bint Uhbān that he said: ‘When ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib came here to Basrah, he called on my father, and said: O Abū Muslim, are you not going to help me against these people? My father said: Yes I am. Then he called his slave-girl and said: O girl, bring [me] my sword. She brought it. Then he drew out a hand-span of it – there it was, a wooden sword. Then he said: My friend and your cousin [i.e. the Prophet] took from me this covenant that when there is *fitnah* among Muslims, then make a sword from wood. Now if you want I can come with you. [‘Alī] said: No. I do not need you and your sword.’² Similarly, when Abū Hurayrah came to Damascus and stayed as a guest in the house of Abū l-Dardā’, the women used the chance to learn from him. Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Ubaydillāh has narrated from Karimah bint al-Ḥashās al-Muzaniyyah that she said: ‘Abū Hurayrah narrated to us when we were in the house of Umm al-Dardā’ that he heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam* – narrating from his Lord that He said: I am with My slave as long as he remembers Me and his lips move with remembrance of Me.’³

The most important and highest chain to *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is one that goes through the great *muḥaddith* Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī. His place of residence was Baghdad. When once he visited Damascus the people crowded to him to read the *Ṣaḥīḥ* with him. The class was arranged in al-Jāmi‘ al-Muẓaffarī, beginning at the end of Shawwāl 630 and concluding on 10 Dhū l-Qa‘dah of the same year. The whole *Ṣaḥīḥ* was read to al-Zabīdī in 22 sessions, and the class was attended by the most eminent scholars and jurists. The last surviving person to narrate from al-Zabīdī after attending these sessions was Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār, by

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *al-mar’ah tuṣallī bi-ghayr khimār*. ² IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, bāb *al-Tathbīt fī l-fitnah*. ³ AL-BAKHARĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tawḥīd*, bāb *qawl Allāh – lā tuḥarrīk bi-hī lisānak*; IBN ḤAJAR, *Fath al-bārī*, xiii. 611; AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 292–93.

whom the chain of narration to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* was much shortened for those after him because he lived such a long life. Women also benefited from this precious opportunity and attended the same sessions on the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, and in great numbers. Among them were Khadījah bint Muḥammad ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 701),¹ and the long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Sulaymān ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Raḥmān al-Isʿardī (d. 705). Ibn Ḥajar confirms this in his account of her: 'She heard the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī.'² Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Maḥmūd al-Baṭāʾi-hiyyah also attended and al-Dhahabī confirms it: 'She heard the *Ṣaḥīḥ* from al-Zabīdī.'³

The long-lived shaykhah Umm al-Ḥasan Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAmr al-Farrāʾ only attended two sessions and narrated them.⁴ Al-Dhahabī says of Hadiyyah bint ʿAlī Ibn ʿAsākir al-Baghdādī: 'She attended the class of al-Zabīdī.'⁵ Another shaykhah, one well known for her higher *isnād*, Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ bint ʿUmar ibn Asʿad ibn al-Munajjā al-Tanūkhīyyah also attended. Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāṣī says of her: 'She studied with Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* in al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī and also *Musnad al-Shāfiʿī*.'⁶ Ibn Ḥajar says in his account of ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥādī al-Maqdisiyyah: 'She was the last person who narrated *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with high *isnād* by her hearing [it]; and it is a wonderful coincidence that Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ was the last woman in the world among all those who narrated from al-Zabīdī and she died in 716, while this ʿĀʾishah is similar to her in dying in 816 and she had above [Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ] this quality that even from among the men who heard from al-Ḥajjār, the colleague of Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ, none remained in the world other than herself. Between the death of ʿĀʾishah and Sitt

¹ Muḥammad IBN JĀBIR (d. 749), *Barnamāj al-Wādī ʿAshī*, 169; AL-DHAHABĪ, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 232. ² IBN HAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, ii. 119. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ *Dhayl al-ʿibār*, 60. ⁴ IBN HAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, iii. 351. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, ii. 362. ⁶ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyūd*, ii. 397. ⁷ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 351.

al-Wuzarā' the difference is exactly one hundred years.⁷ In the thirteenth century Umm al-Faḍl Nafīṣah bint 'Abū l-ʿIzz Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Shanwānī studied with Ḥāfiẓ Muḥammad al-Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī *Thulāthiyyāt* of al-Bukhārī – i.e. those ḥadīths with only three narrators before al-Bukhārī – and *Arbaʿūn* of al-Nawawī in 1189 in the house of her father.¹

TEACHERS IN OTHER TOWNS

Women also got ḥadīths from teachers of other towns, either by travelling to them, or by correspondence, or by request of *ijāzabs*. Among those who travelled in the path of knowledge, the Kufan *muḥaddithah* Jasrah bint Dajājah al-ʿĀmiriyyah, got ḥadīth in Madinah from 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, 'Ā'ishah and Umm Salamah, and from Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī.² Muḥammad ibn al-Sā'ib ibn Barakah narrated from his mother that she said: 'I did *ṭawāf* of the House in a group of women from Banū al-Mughīrah in the company of 'Ā'ishah. The women mentioned Ḥassān ibn Thābit and attacked him [for his part in the slander about 'Ā'ishah]. 'Ā'ishah reminded [them of] Ḥassān's poetic verses in praise of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa-sallam* – and said: I hope that God will enter him into paradise because of [it].'³

In later centuries Fāṭimah bint 'Abd al-ʿAzīz al-Qazwīnī studied ḥadīth with Abū l-Ḥusayn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Jawharī al-Mawṣilī in Tripoli, and with Abū Muḥammad Ṭāhir ibn Naṣr al-Asfijābī and the qāḍī Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā al-Saʿdī in Egypt. She settled in Ṣur.⁴ Jumū'ah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Ubaydullāh al-Maḥmiyyah of Nishapur (d. ca. 396), having studied with the teachers of her town, did ḥajj and heard from various teachers on the way.⁵ Al-Sulamī says: 'I heard her say: In Baghdad I called upon Shaykh Abū l-Ḥusayn

¹See *ṣamā'āt at the end of Juzʿ fi-hi Thulāthiyyāt* AL-BUKHĀRĪ. ²AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 143. ³See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ii. 515. ⁴AL-SUYŪṬĪ (d. 911), *al-Minjam fi l-muʿjam*, 95–97, 85. ⁵AL-ṢAYRAFĪNĪ, *al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-Siyāq li-l-Taʾrikh Naysābūr*, 183.

al-Khuḍrī, and he asked me: Who did you 'accompany' [i.e. study with for a long time]? I said: I 'accompanied' al-Naṣrābādī. Then he asked me: What do you remember of his sayings? I said: I heard him say: Whoever's connection (*nisbah*) is correct, his knowledge is perfect. On that al-Khuḍrī [being impressed by what he heard] remained silent. When I came back al-Naṣrābādī was pleased and said: That is how it should be for anyone who calls upon a shaykh.¹ This woman scholar travelled continually to learn from different teachers in different places.

Where the women could not travel to the scholars they would resort to correspondence with them. For example Fāṭimah, also called Sutaytah, daughter of the qāḍī Kamāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Shīrīn al-Ḥanafī, used to write letters to scholars. When Ḥāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī's brother died, she wrote to him to console him.²

The women got *ijāzahs* from the scholars of other towns. For example ʿĀʾishah bint ʿUmar ibn Rushayd al-Fihri of Sabta in Morocco received *ijāzahs* from a lot of scholars in Egypt, Makkah, Madinah and Syria. Another example is Āsiyah bint Jārullāh ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Shaybānī (d. 873): the large number of scholars who gave her *ijāzahs* are listed by al-Suyūṭī (d. 911): there are 105 names in his list, from different towns and places.³

NUMBER OF TEACHERS

Among the narrators of ḥadīth there are those who had no more than one or two teachers. About such narrators a genre of writing developed among the people of ḥadīth called 'al-wuḥḍān wa-l-mathānī'. At the end of the most famous of these compilations, *al-Āḥād wa-l-mathānī* of Abū Bakr ibn Abī ʿĀṣim (d. 287), are mentioned those women who have narrated only one or two ḥadīths.

¹ AL-SULAMĪ (d. 412), *Dhikr al-niswah al-mutaʿabbidāt*, 423. The term of genealogy (*nisbah*) is here used metaphorically to indicate the spiritual connection between master and disciple. ² AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Ḍawʿ al-lāmiʿ*, xii. 111. ³ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Minjam fī l-muʿjam*, 95–97, 85.

However, many women received ḥadīths from a great many narrators, most famously ‘Ā’ishah who, as well as narrating directly from the Prophet himself, also narrated from Ḥamzah ibn ‘Amr al-Aslamī, Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqās, ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, her father Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, Judāmah bint Wahb al-Asadiyyah, and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet.¹ The Successor, Umm al-Dardā’ narrated from her husband Abū l-Dardā’, Salmān al-Fārisī, Ka‘b ibn ‘Āsim al-Ash‘arī, ‘Ā’ishah, Abū Hurayrah, Faḍālah ibn ‘Ubayd al-Anṣārī. In later centuries, the renowned *muḥaddithah* Shuhdah received ḥadīth from Tīrād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ibn Ṭalḥah al-Ni‘ālī, Abū l-Ḥasan ibn Ayyūb, Abū l-Khaṭṭāb ibn al-Baṭīr, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Yūsuf, Ḥasan ibn Salmān al-Daqqāq, Thābit Bundār, Abū Yāsir Aḥmad, ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn ‘Ulawān al-Shaybānī, Ja‘far al-Sarrāj Abū Maṣṣūr Muḥammad ibn Harīṣah, Maṣṣūr ibn Ḥayd al-Naysabūrī, Abū l-Barakāt Ḥamd ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Wakīl, Abū Ghālīb al-Baḳillānī and many others.²

As for women who received *ijāzahs*, the lists of the teachers of some of them are, as I mentioned just above, very long indeed. For example Āsiyah bint Muḥammad al-‘Irbilī received *ijāzahs* of over two hundred teachers, both male and female. Among those teachers are: the Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar ibn Shukr al-Maqdisī, ‘Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn al-Shaykh Badrān al-Maqdisī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥibatullāh al-Shīrāzī, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ibn ‘Umar al-Qawwās, ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī l-Fahim, Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-‘Arab bint al-Shaykh Tāj al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Umar al-Sulamī, Umm Ibrāhīm Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm al-Ba‘labakkiyyah, the long-lived imam Kamāl al-Dīn Humām ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī, Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, and Amat al-‘Azīz Khadijah bint Yūsuf ibn Ghunaymah.³

¹ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xiii. 227. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām* (sub anno 571–580), 146. ³ *Majmū‘at al-Ijāzāt al-makhtūṭah fī l-Madrasah al-Dīyā’iyyah bi-saffh Qāsyūn*.

Chapter 5

The reading matter

What women studied varied from one place to another, even between schools in the same city, and it varied between periods. It is therefore difficult to present a satisfactory overview of it. Nevertheless, it may still be useful to attempt a general sketch, and mention those elements of a formal curriculum in the later centuries that were stable across many parts of the Islamic world. After that, in the concluding section of this chapter, I survey the kinds of ḥadīth books that became and remained popular.

THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES

Women's education in pre-Islamic Arabia was, aside from the traditional household skills, mostly oral, confined to poetry, fine speech and horsemanship, with writing skills among them very rare. As Islam became established, the scope of their education and culture widened rapidly. They learnt the Qur'ān by heart, with some also studying variants among the known recitations; they acquired the ḥadīth of the Prophet and understanding of the religion through the *Sunnah*. Some were so proficient, and so devoted to the *dīn*, that they became jurists and muftis. They were also trained in writing and speaking, and the different modes of eloquence.

In the first three centuries, there was no established, formal programme of Islamic education for either men or women. However, we can derive from the general culture of that time that what students began with was language, with the aim of skill in different styles of expression. Arabic grammar, in the strict sense of the term, developed from the second century on. However, an awareness of the need to know grammar in order

to avoid errors in understanding the commands of God and the teaching of His Messenger is traditionally dated to the caliphate of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. According to the renowned man of letters al-Mubarrid (d. 285), awareness of the need to think about grammar may have arisen because of a woman. He said: ‘Al-Māzinī narrated to us that the cause of the foundation of grammar was that the daughter of Abū l-Aswad [d. 69] once said to her father *mā ashadda al-ḥarri?* [What is the most violent of heat? instead of *mā ashadda al-ḥarra!* How violent the heat is! So] he said: Pebbles in the hot earth. She said: I meant to express my shock at the heat. Then he said: Have people begun to make mistakes [like that]? Then he told ‘Alī about that; [and then ‘Alī] dictated to him some basic rules that were later expanded by Abū l-Aswad.’¹

After or alongside acquiring language skills, the girls would turn their attention to the Qur’ān, learning how to recite and memorize it, and understand its meaning. Only then would they start learning ḥadīths by memorizing and then narrating them. Those with more aptitude would go on to learn how to think about the ‘scholarly apparatus’ of the ḥadīths – their occasions and their narrators – how to distinguish among narrators and chains of narrators, and learn the *sunnaḥs* that derive from the ḥadīth and how to implement them.

THE FOURTH TO THE SIXTH CENTURIES

Systemization of the curriculum, beginning in the fourth, developed in the fifth century under the guiding hand of the great vizier Nizām al-Mulk Qiwām al-Dīn Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn Ishāq al-Ṭūsī (408–84). A shrewd and far-sighted administrator, and himself interested in knowledge, he established scholarships and grants for students and founded large colleges in Baghdad, Nishapur and Tus. He also founded many madrasas, notably in Marw, Herat, Balkh, and Basrah. Philosophy, theology (*kalām*), logic, and practical sciences like mathe-

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, iv. 83.

matics, medicine and engineering were part of the curriculum of the 'Nizāmī' colleges and schools, and these subjects spread to other schools albeit taught at an elementary level.

From my study of biographies of the women scholars of this period I can affirm that girls usually began their studies with Arabic language and developed reading, speaking and writing skills. At the same time they would learn the Qur'ān, reciting and memorizing it. Some learnt the whole of it by heart at a remarkably early age. One example of that is Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn Mūsā ibn Ja'far al-Tāwūsiyyah al-Husayniyyah (5th c.), who had memorized the Qur'ān before she was nine years old. Later, she learnt ḥadīth with her father (d. 464).¹

Grammar must have been part of the syllabus since the second-third century, though the earliest reference that I have found to a woman's expertise in it is from the fourth. It comes in the account of Maryam bint Jahsh, wife of the great Yemeni scholar Jamāl al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Abī l-Fawāris al-Hamdānī (4th c.). It is an illustration of her knowledge and her acuteness of mind that she was able subtly to resolve a difficult point for her husband. He had been engaged in debate with some adherents of the Murji'ī heresy. These are people who held that faith in the heart – even if undisclosed, regardless of what one utters with one's tongue, regardless of any deeds that one does with one's limbs – suffices to secure salvation. 'Alī alluded to the verse in sūrat al-A'raf (6. 40), quoting the end of it: 'Indeed those who belie Our signs (*āyāt*) and disdain them – for them the gates of the heavens will not be opened, nor will they enter the Garden, until *the camel passes through the eye of the needle*.' The Murji'ī who was debating said: 'This is easy for God, with His power, if He wills, *He passes the camel through the eye of the needle*.' When 'Alī returned home his mind was still preoccupied, and he was sleepless because of the Murji'ī's retort. Maryam asked him what the matter was. After he had explained it, she said: 'In the verse of the Qur'ān *the camel* is the subject [of the verb], not

¹See 'Umar Ridā KAḤḤĀLAH (d. 1407), *A'lam al-nisā'*, iv. 86.

object.’ Her husband now understood what he could have said in answer to the Murjiʿī, was content and slept. Early next morning he went to his companions and told them what should render the Murjiʿīs speechless.¹

The biographers’ account of Amat al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Ḍabbī al-Maḥāmīlī (d. 377) sheds light on the syllabus from the beginning of the fourth century. Al-Dāra-ḡuṭnī says: ‘She memorized the Qurʾān, and learnt *fiqh* according to the *madhhab* of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, inheritance law and its mathematical calculation, *dawr*, grammar and other sciences.’² Also, al-Dhahabī says: ‘She narrated from her father, from Ismāʿīl al-Warrāq, ʿAbd al-Ghāfir ibn Salamah, and memorized the Qurʾān and studied the *fiqh* according to the *madhhab* of Imām al-Shāfiʿī, inheritance law, *dawr*, and Arabic language and grammar, and other Islamic sciences.’³

In this period, study of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* became widespread among men and women. The most famous woman of the fourth century to hear the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ* directly from her teacher – Abū l-Haytham al-Kushmīhanī (d. 389) – was the great scholar, Shaykhah Umm al-Kirām Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥātim al-Marwazzīyah (d. 463).⁴ Also in this period the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was introduced into Spain. Khadijah bint Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Saʿīd al-Shantiyālī (in the fifth century) heard the whole of it from its famous narrator, Abū Dharr ʿAbd ibn Aḥmad al-Harawī.⁵ Ibn Bishkwāl (d. 578) says: ‘I have seen her *samāʿ* in the originals of her father in his handwriting; and she came with him to Spain.’⁶

Women also studied the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, even engrossing themselves in *mustakhraj* of it – the narration of its texts by a

¹See LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-nisāʾ al-Yamaniyyāt*, 177. ²AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾrīkh al-Baghdād*, xiv, 443. al-Jurjānī (d. 816; *al-Taʾrīfāt*, 76) defines *dawr* as a kind of argumentation in which each proposition is dependent upon the next in a circular chain. ³AL-DHAHABĪ *Taʾrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 351–80)*, 607. ⁴AL-DHAHABĪ *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xviii. 223. ⁵IBN BISHKWĀL (d. 578), *K. al-Ṣilah*, ii. 696. ⁶*Ibid.*

different route with higher *isnād*. The renowned scholar Fāṭimah bint al-Ustādh Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 480), wife of Abū l-Qāsim al-Qushayrī,¹ heard the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ Abī 'Awānah* (*mustakbraj* of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*) and then later transmitted it. Ibn Ḥajar, in the account of his teacher Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Takrītī says, after mentioning his *isnād* for *Ṣaḥīḥ Abī 'Awānah* to 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Ḥāfiz Abī Sa'd ibn al-Sam'ānī: 'He heard it from Abū l-Barākāt al-Furāwī, who heard it from Fāṭimah bint 'Alī al-Daqqāq, who heard it from Abū Nu'aym 'Abd al-Mālik ibn al-Ḥasan al-Isfrāyīnī, who heard it from Abū 'Awānah.'²

Some women took an interest in ḥadīth books written on specific topics. For example, Fāṭimah bint Aḥmad ibn al-Faḍl al-'Anazī studied *Kitāb al-Ṣalāh* of Abū Nu'aym al-Faḍl ibn Dukayn with Shaykh Abū Bakr al-A'raj Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Shādhān in 431.³ Others specialized in sub-disciplines of the sciences of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. For example, Umm Sa'd Asmā' bint Aḥmad ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Aḥmad al-Bahrāniyyah (5th c.) specialized in the science of *nāsikh* (abrogating) and *mansūkh* (abrogated). Ibn Ḥajar narrated *K. al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh* of 'Aṭā' al-Khūrasānī (d. 135) from Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr from Sulaymān ibn Hamzah, from Ja'far ibn 'Alī from Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī from Asmā' bint Aḥmad al-Bahrāniyyah, with her *isnād* to the author.⁴

Taṣawwuf became very popular in this period in many parts of the Islamic world and books on different aspects of the ascetic life were widely studied. Shaykhah Umm al-Dalāl Amat al-Raḥmān bint Abī l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Wāḥid ibn al-Ḥasan ibn al-Junayd (d. 487) studied *K. al-Tafarrud wa-l-'uṣṣāh* of Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ḥusayn al-Ājurī with Abū l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Malik ibn Muḥammad ibn Bishrān.⁵ One consequence of the

¹See IBN NUQTĀH, *al-Taḥqīd*, 497; AL-DHAHABĪ *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, xviii. 479. ²IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-Mu'assas*, ii. 481. ³See the *samā'āt* in ABŪ NU'AYM al-Faḍl ibn DUKAYN, *K. al-Ṣalāh*, 51. ⁴IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Mu'jam al-mufahras*, 113. ⁵IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 573–74.

emphasis on asceticism was deepened regard for preaching and the writings of those famous for affecting sermons. The long-lived Khadījah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Wā‘izah al-Shāhjahāniyyah (376–460) studied *Amālī* of Abū l-Ḥusayn ibn Sam‘ūn al-Wā‘iz with its author.¹ ‘Ā’ishah bint Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm al-Wā‘izah (d. 460) wrote down the *Amālī* of Ibn Mandah, receiving the work directly from him.²

Also in this period, interest in the ‘Forty ḥadīths’ genre blossomed. It is recorded in the account of Umm al-‘Alā’, the grand-daughter of Shaykh Abū l-Ṭayyib ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn Shammah that she attended the reading of the *Forty Ḥadīths* of Abū Bakr ibn al-Muqrī (d. 381) with her grandfather in 455.³

As for poetry and literature, there is the example of Ishrāq al-Suwaydā’ (ca. 450), the slave of Abū l-Muṭarrif ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ghalbūn al-Qurṭubī, from Valencia in Spain. She studied Arabic grammar, language and literature and became so expert in ‘*arūd*’ (prosody) that she was called al-‘Arūdiyyah. She also learnt by heart and lectured on two important works on literature: *al-Kāmil* of Abū l-‘Abbās al-Mubarrid and *Amālī* of Abū ‘Alī al-Qālī.⁴ Another woman, the daughter of Sharīf al-Raḍī learnt the *Nahj al-balāghah* from her uncle. Ibn al-Ikhwah al-Baghdādī (d. 548) narrated the book from her.⁵

FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE NINTH CENTURIES

The education of women did not change much in this period, though it became more organized. The early emphasis on the language and grammar remained, with students memorizing concise works on the subject: for example, Nuḍār bint al-Shaykh Abī Ḥayyān (d. 730) learnt by heart an elementary text on grammar.⁶

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 447. ² AL-DHAHABĪ *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 302. ³ See the *samā‘āt* at the end of Ibn al-Muqrī, *al-Arba‘ūn* in TAKALAH, Muḥammad Ziyād ibn ‘Umar, *Jamharat al-ajzā’ al-ḥadīthiyyah*, 133. ⁴ See al-Awsī AL-MARĀKASHĪ, *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmilah li-K. al-manṣūl wa-l-ṣīlah*, 480. ⁵ KAḤḤĀLAH, *A‘lām al-nisā’*, ii. 295. ⁶ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, iv. 395.

Commitment to memorizing the Qurʾān and understanding it also continued. Some learnt it at an early age – like Sharaf al-Ashrāf bint ʿAlī ibn Mūsā al-Ṭāwūsiyyah al-Ḥasaniyyah, who memorized the whole Qurʾān, when she was twelve;¹ others did so much later in life – like Umm al-Ḥasan Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Abīwardī (d. 555), who memorized parts of the Qurʾān and recited them regularly, as well as studying the ḥadīth sciences.² Some women made a particular study of the seven recitations, like Umm al-ʿIzz bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ghālīb al-ʿAbdarī al-Dānī (d. 617).³ Some of them learnt books of *tajwīd*. In 786 Ḥusn bint Shaykh Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Saʿdiyyah al-Makkiyyah (d. 842) learnt part of *al-Shāṭibiyyah* and another work on the subject.⁴

There are other women who specialized in some sciences of the Qurʾān. ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Rahīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Zujāj studied with her teachers *Gharāʾib al-Qurʾān* of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn ʿAzīz al-Sijistānī (d. 330),⁵ and *Fadāʾil al-Qurʾān* of Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ayyūb al-Bajalī (3rd c.).⁶ The long-lived shaykhah, famed for her higher *isnād*, Ḍawʾ al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAjībah al-Bāqdāriyyah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 647) learnt *Fadāʾil al-Qurʾān* of al-Bajalī from Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Shīrāzī with an *isnād* to its author.⁷ She studied *K. Akhlāq ḥamalat al-Qurʾān* of Abū Bakr al-Ājurri (d. 360) with Abū l-Faṭḥ Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī by his *isnād* to its author;⁸ and *Mushkil al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm* of Muḥyi l-Sunnah al-Baghawī with Ḥāfiẓ Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī, who got it from the author.⁹

Summaries of *fiqh* were popular in the syllabus: among the Ḥanafīs, *Mukhtaṣar al-Qudūrī*, among Mālikīs, *al-Risālah al-Qayrawāniyyah*; among Shāfiʿīs *Mukhtaṣar al-Muẓanī*. Al-Dhahabī has

¹KAHḤĀLAH, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ*, ii. 292. ²AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, *al-Muntakhab min Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, iii. 1918. ³AL-DHAHABĪ says: 'She was well versed in the seven readings.' *Taʾrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 611–20)*, 328. ⁴IBN FAHD, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, 310; *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 1411. ⁵KAHḤĀLAH, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ*, iii. 158. ⁶*Ibid.* ⁷Sirāj al-Dīn AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *Mushaykhah*, MS, 48. ⁸*Ibid.*, 83. ⁹*Ibid.*, 95.

recorded that *Mukhtaṣar al-Muḥzanī* was among those useful books given as dowry to the bride at the wedding.¹ Some specialized in works of *fiqh* written by and for experts. Fāṭimah al-Samarqandīyyah (6th c.) memorized all of *Tuhfat al-ṣuqabāʾ*.² Others studied specific topics in *fiqh* – for example Shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Khadījah bint Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 634) studied *K. al-Amwāl* of al-Azdī with her father.

As for the ‘Six Books’, the principal compilations of ḥadīth, the examples of women’s interest in them will be given under a separate heading. Some were interested in other sound works of ḥadīth also, those less popularly known. Khadījah bint Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Dāʾim studied *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān* with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī l-Hayjā ibn al-Zarrād al-Ḥarīrī.³ Umm al-Hayā Ḥafṣah bint Abī ʿAbdillāh Aḥmad ibn Mulāʿib al-Baghdādiyyah al-ʿAzajīyyah (d. 612) learnt *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Hammām ibn Munnabih (d. 131) from Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Urmawī with his *sanad* to the Companion Abū Hurayrah.⁴ The long-lived shaykhah of high *isnād* Tajannī bint ʿAbdillāh al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575) learnt *Ḥadīth al-Mukbarranī wa-l-Marwazī*⁵ and *Amālī al-Maḥāmīlī* with Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭalḥah al-Niʿālī,⁶ and *Juzʾ Hilāl* with Ṭirād ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Zaynabī, who got it from its author.⁷ Umm al-Khayr Ḥalimah bint al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn ʿAsākīr studied *Juzʾ ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥimyarī* with her father in 541.⁸

Hadīths narrated principally through women were a special interest. Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) studied *Faḍāʾil Fāṭimah* of Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn Shāhīn with her grandfather.⁹ Sitt al-Shām bint Khalīl ibn Naṣr studied 41 ḥadīths from *Musnad al-nisāʾ al-ṣaḥābiyyāt* with Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī in 808.¹⁰ ʿĀʾishah bint Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xiv. 233. ²ʿAbd al-Qādir AL-QURASHĪ, *al-Jwābir al-mudīʿiyyah fī Ṭabaqāt al-Hanafīyyah*. ³ḌIYĀʾ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 364. ⁴AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *Mushaykhah*, MS, 75–76. ⁵IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 19–20. ⁶*Ibid.*, ii. 234. ⁷*Ibid.*, ii. 346. ⁸See *samāʾāt* at end of *Juzʾ ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad AL-HIMYARĪ*. ⁹IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 225. ¹⁰KAHHĀLAH, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ*, ii. 155.

studied with her father his book *al-Iṣābah fī mā istadrakat ʿĀʾishah ʿalā l-ṣaḥābah* in 794.¹

From the sixth century onwards, women are found learning books written on the principles of ḥadīth and narrators of ḥadīth. Shaykhah ʿAzīzah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ṭarrāḥ (d. 600) received the whole of *al-Kifāyah fī qawānīn al-riwāyah* of Abū Bakr al-Khaṭīb (d. 463) from her grandfather, who narrated it directly from the author.² Khadījah bint ʿUmar ibn Abī Bakr studied *K. al-Taʾrīkh* of Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn with Abū l-Faḍl Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad al-ʿIrāqī in 652.³ Fāṭimah bint al-Mubārak studied *al-Taʾrīkh al-kaḥbīr* of Imām al-Bukhārī in 503 with Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ghanāʾim al-Narsī.⁴ The long-lived Shaykhah Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 688) studied *K. al-Nasab* of Zubayr ibn Bakkār with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrazad.⁵ Dawʿ al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAjībah (d. 647) studied Ibn Mandah's (d. 395) *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah* with Masʿūd al-Thaqafi.⁶ Sitt al-Taraf bint al-Imām Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Tinnīsī studied part of *Taʾrīkh Jurjān* of al-Sahmī (d. 427) with her father in 597.⁷ In 529, Rabīʿah bint Saʿd al-Khayr read *K. al-Duʿafāʾ wa-l-matrūkīn* with Imām Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Khayrūn;⁸ and *al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ* with Abū l-Qāsim al-Mubārak ibn al-Buzū-rī.⁹ The great scholar and expert in Qurʾānic reading, Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Bagh-dādīyyah (d. 532) studied *K. Gharīb al-ḥadīth* of Abū Sulaymān al-Khaṭṭābī with Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī.¹⁰ Umm al-Ḥusn Kamāl bint al-Ḥāfiẓ Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Samarqandī (d. 558) studied *Taqyīd al-*

¹See the *samāʿ* on the last page of *al-Iṣābah fī mā istadrakat ʿĀʾishah ʿalā l-ṣaḥābah*. ²DIYĀʾ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Thabat al-masmūʿāt*, 205–06. ³See *samāʿāt* in Yaḥyā IBN MAʿĪN, *K. al-Taʾrīkh*, iv. 509–10. ⁴See *samāʿ* at the end of vol. 1 of AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Taʾrīkh al-kaḥbīr*. ⁵DIYĀʾ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 372. ⁶*Ibid.*, 383. ⁷Abū l-Qāsim AL-SAHMĪ (d. 427), *Taʾrīkh Jurjān*, 368. ⁸See *samāʿ* at the end of AL-DĀRAQUṬNĪ (d. 385), *al-Duʿafāʾ wa-l-matrūkūn*. ⁹See *samāʿāt* in the first part of AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, p. 59, and what follows. ¹⁰AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, *al-Taḥbīr*, ii. 256.

‘ilm of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī with her father.¹ Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr ibn Mūsā ibn al-Khallāl studied *Su’ālāt al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Silafī* with Shaykh Imām Abū l-Faḍl Ja‘far ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥibatullāh al-Hamadhānī in 635.² Umm al-Faḍl Zaynab bint Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qaysī (d. 610) studied *K. al-Asmā’ al-mubhamah fi l-anbā’ al-muḥkamah* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī with Imām Abū l-Faṭḥ Naṣrullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Miṣ-ṣīṣī.³ Umm al-Ḥasan Asmā’ bint al-Jamāl al-Mahrānī (d. 867) studied *Riwāyāt al-abna’ ‘an al-abnā’* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī with al-Kamāl Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Naṣrullāh and Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ghālīb.⁴

Another focus of study was biography of the Prophet and the story of his battles. Shaykhah Daw’ al-Ṣabāḥ ‘Ajibah al-Bāq-dāriyyah studied *al-Shamā’il* of al-Tirmidhī with al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid and Rajā’ ibn Ḥamid ibn Rajā’ al-Ma’dīnī.⁵ Umm al-Hanā’ Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr al-‘Uthmānī al-Murāghī studied *al-Shifā’* and *al-Burdah* with al-‘Izz ibn Jamā‘ah in 767.⁶ Umm Aḥmad Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Rājīḥ al-Maqdisī studied the whole *Maghāzī* of al-Wāqidī in 603.⁷ Interest in the battles of the Prophet led to interest in the history of later conquests. The famous eighth century scholar Zahrah bint al-Muḥaddith Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn Ḥusayn ibn Abī Bakr al-Khutanī al-Ḥanafī studied *K. Futūḥ Miṣr wa-l-Maghrib* of Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam al-Miṣrī (d. 257) with Kamāl al-Dīn Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Shujā‘ al-Miṣrī.⁸

Interest in theology also continued: Zaynab bint ‘Umar al-Kindī (d. 699) learnt *K. al-Tawḥīd* of Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Khuzaymah (d. 311) with Abū Rawḥ ‘Abd al-Mu‘izz

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Tagyīd al-‘ilm, Muqaddimah*, 25. ² See *samā‘ūt* at the end of *Su’ālāt al-Ḥāfiẓ AL-SILAFĪ*, 127. ³ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *K. al-Asmā’ al-mubhamah fi l-anbā’ al-muḥkamah, Muqaddimah*. ⁴ IBN FAHD, *Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh*, 397. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, ii. 14–18. ⁶ AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi‘*, xii. 6. ⁷ See *samā‘* in MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤĀFĪZ, *al-Madrasah al-‘Umarīyyah*, 109. ⁸ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, ii. 14–42; *al-Mu‘jam al-mufharas*, 179.

ibn Muḥammad al-Harāwī, with his *sanad* going back to Ibn Khu-zaymah.¹ Daw' al-Ṣabāḥ 'Aḡibah al-Bāqdāriyyah received *K. al-Tawḥīd* of Ibn Mandah (d. 395) from Ḥasan ibn 'Abbās al-Rus-tamī, Mas'ūd ibn al-Ḥasan al-Thaqafī and Abū l-Khayr ibn al-Baghbān, all three from 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah from his father, its author.² She also studied *Dalā'il al-Nubūwwah* of al-Bayhaqī with al-Mubārak ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ṭabbākh,³ and *K. al-Īmān* of Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Umar al-Zuhri, with Mas'ūd al-Thaqafī.⁴

FROM LATER NINTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

From the later ninth–tenth century on, there was a decline in ḥadīth scholarship across the Islamic world. The numbers of men and women engaged in it decreased and so did their reading material. Nevertheless, primary education remained more or less the same, with Arabic grammar as the starting point. Some students memorized concise works on grammar. Umm al-Ḥayā' Umāmah bint Qāḍī al-Quḍāt Athīr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaḥnah al-Ḥanafī (d. 939) knew by heart some of *Mulḥat al-irāb* and other books.⁵

Besides grammar, interest in the Qur'ān remained strong. Būran bint Muḥammad Athīr al-Dīn (d. 938) read the Qur'ān, studied books and copied them.⁶ The emperor Awrangzeb 'Alamgīr (d. 1113) paid Maryam al-Kashmīriyyah 30,000 gold dinars after his daughter Zayb al-Nisā' memorized the Qur'ān with her. Zayb al-Nisā' also learnt writing and different styles of calligraphy, and she studied ḥadīth and *fiqh* according to the syllabus of that time.⁷ The syllabus for women was then the same as the men's, and included Arabic grammar, mathematics, logic, philosophy and other sciences. That was not the case in India only: an example from Yemen in the same period is Zaynab

¹IBN HAJAR, *al-Mu'jam al-muṣṣharas*, 52. ²Id., *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 517.

³*Ibid.*, ii. 38, 39. ⁴*Ibid.*, 43. ⁵IBN AL-HANBALI (d. 971), *Durr al-ḥibab fi ta'rīkh a'yan Ḥalab*, i. 338. ⁶*Ibid.*, 403. ⁷'Abd al-Ḥayy AL-ḤASANĪ (d. 1341), *Nuḥbat al-khawātir*, vi. 99–100.

bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Muʿayyadī (d. 1114), who studied grammar, logic, theology, *fiqh*, astrology, astronomy, literature and other sciences.¹ Jahān Āra Begum bint al-Sultān Shāhjahān (d. 1092) studied the art of Qurʾānic recitation and *tajwīd* with Sitt Khānum, learnt calligraphy, Persian and became expert in composition, poetry, household management and other skills.²

Some women turned, after *tajwīd*, to ḥadīth. Khunāthah bint Bakkār ibn ʿAlī al-Maʿāfirī (d. 1159) was an expert in all seven recitations and a scholar of ḥadīth.³ Ḥadīth education began with the *Forty Ḥadīths* of al-Nawawī. Zayn al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn (10th c.) knew by heart *al-Jazariyyah* in *tajwīd*, and al-Nawawī's *Forty Ḥadīths*.⁴ Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Manshāwīyah studied *Forty Ḥadīths* of al-Nawawī and *Thulāthiyyāt al-Bukhārī* with Ḥāfiẓ Murtaḍā' al-Zabīdī in 1189.⁵

Some women did go further in ḥadīth study. Amat al-Khāliq bint Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Qāhirī (d. 902) studied in 816 with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī some parts of *Fawā'id* of Tammām al-Rāzī (d. 414), large parts of the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām, *Musnad Aḥmad* [ibn Ḥanbal], *al-Ghaylāniyyāt* and other books of ḥadīth. She received *ijāzabs* from many scholars.⁶ She also studied *Mashyakhab* of Ibn al-Bukhārī and *al-Muʿjam al-ṣaghir* of al-Ṭabarānī.⁷ In 857 Aymalik bint Aḥmad studied with Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Hilāl al-Azdī K. *al-Tawwābīn* of Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah (d. 620).⁸ Bāy Khātūn bint Ibrāhīm al-Ḥalabiyyah (d. 942) studied *Minhāj* of al-Nawawī and part of *Ihyā' ʿulūm al-dīn* with Zayn al-Dīn al-Shammā'.⁹ Bulbul bint ʿAbdillāh al-Rūmiyyah studied with her master, Shaykh Yūsuf ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī the *Forty Ḥadīths* of Abū Bakr ibn al-Muqrī in

¹ LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-nisā' al-Yamaniyyāt*, 91. ² AL-HASANĪ, *Nuḥbat al-khawātir*, v. 135. ³ KAHHĀLAH, *Al-lām al-nisā'*, i. 375. ⁴ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad AL-HALABĪ (d. 1003), *Muʿat al-adhbān*, ii. 871. ⁵ See *samā'āt* at the end of *Thulāthiyyāt AL-BUKHĀRĪ*. ⁶ AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 12. ⁷ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Minjam fī l-muʿjam*, 98. ⁸ IBN QUDĀMAH, K. *al-Tawwābīn*, *Muqad-dimah*. ⁹ Muḥammad Rāghib AL-ṬABBĀKH (d. 1370), *I'lām al-nubalā'* v. 507.

880,¹ and in 897 *Ḥadīth al-Baghawī wa Ibn Ṣā'id wa-l-Hāshimī* and *Fadā'il Bayt al-Maqdis* of Ḥāfiẓ Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī (d. 642).² Ḥabībah bint Shaykh al-Islām 'Abd al-Ḥaqq al-Sanbātī (10th c.) studied with her father *Amālī al-Maḥāmili* and *Ḥadīth Sa'dān ibn Naṣr*.³ Khadijah bint Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Muqrī al-Ḥanafī (d. 935) studied the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī with Shaykh Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī.⁴ Sārah bint Numayr studied with Ḥāfiẓ ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī (d. 842) his book *al-Lafẓ al-mukarram bi-faḍl 'Ashūrā' al-Muḥarram*.⁵ Ṣābirīn al-Nūbiyyah (10th c.) studied the *Fawā'id al-'Irāqīyyīn* of al-Naqqāsh with Umm Hānī al-Hūrīniyyah.⁶ Zaynab bint Aktā (11th c.) studied *al-Mu'jam al-awsaṭ* of al-Ṭabarānī with Shaykh 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Muḥammad al-Sanbātī.⁷

Besides general and specialized study of ḥadīth, women also studied *sīrah* and *kalām*. For example, in 906 'Ā'ishah bint Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Kinānī read *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām and *Dalā'il al-nubuwwah* with Ḥāfiẓ Yūsuf ibn 'Abd al-Hādī.⁸

IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

The Qur'ān continued to be the foundation of the syllabus in this century as before. Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn 'Azzūz al-Fāsiyyah (d. 1323) knew the Qur'ān by heart and read it with different readings, with Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan Janbūr.⁹ After that the women would study the common syllabus, comprising language and rational and traditional sciences. The long-lived *muḥaddithah* Amatullāh bint 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Dihlawiyyah (d. 1357) studied

¹See *samā'āt* at the end of *al-Arba'ūn* of Ibn al-Muqrī in TAKALAH, *Jamharah al-Ajza' al-ḥadīthiyyah*, 130. ²See *samā'āt* at the end of *al-Ḥadīth al-Baghawī wa Ibn Ṣā'id al-Hāshimī*, *ibid.*, 270. ³See *Shi'ar al-ibrār fī l-ad'iyah wa-l-adhkār* in IBN MANDAH, *al-Fawā'id*, 338. ⁴Najm al-Dīn AL-GHAZZI, *al-Kawākib al-sā'irah*, ii. 141. ⁵See *samā'* in *al-Lafẓ al-mukarram bi-faḍl 'Ashūrā' al-Muḥarram* in *Majmū' rasā'il*, 130. ⁶See *Juz' Fawā'id al-'Irāqīyyīn*, 161 in *al-Fawā'id* of IBN MANDAH. ⁷See *samā'āt* in *Mu'jam al-awsaṭ*, i. 106. ⁸See the *samā'* in LEDER *et al.*, *al-Madrasah al-'Umarīyyah*, 294–95. ⁹KAHHĀLAH, *A'lām al-nisā'*, i. 322.

the Qurʾān, grammar, Arabic literature, and Ḥanafī *fiqh* with her father, then devoted herself to ḥadīth, reading the Six Books with him many times, and other more specialized works including *qjṣāʾ* and *musalsalāt*.¹ Amatullāh ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasaniyyah (d. 1396) memorized much of the Qurʾān, and received her primary education, from her uncle Sayyid ʿAzīz al-Raḥmān al-Nadwī and her mother, Khayr al-Nisāʾ. She went on to study a large number of books.

Khadījah bint Aḥmad ibn Jandān (d. 1344) studied with her grandmother elementary *fiqh* and what is necessary for women (e.g. rules about purification and prayer), and with her father *Mukhtaṣar al-Safīnah* and other works.²

Some of them specialized in ḥadīth and studied the Six Books and others. Shams al-Nisāʾ bint Āmir Ḥasan al-Sahsawānī (d. 1308) studied the Qurʾān with *tajwīd*, then learnt calligraphy, Arabic grammar, *tafsīr*, *Mishkat al-masābīh*, then the Six Books, with her father.³ Ṣāliḥah bint ʿInāyat Rasūl al-ʿAbbāsī al-Chirayyākūtī (d. 1318) studied with her father all the books of the syllabus and accompanied him longer until she became expert in both rational and traditional sciences.⁴ Fāṭimah bint Sālīm (d. 1339) of Java learnt reading and writing from her father and studied *al-Minhaj al-mukhtaṣar* of Bā Faḍl and *al-Ajrūmiyyah* with him.⁵ She studied *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with Zubayr ibn Qāsim Bā Raqabah,⁶ and *Awāʾil al-Ajlūnī* with Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Zaynī Daḥlān.⁷ The great scholar Liḥāz al-Nisāʾ bint Ṣābir Ḥusayn al-Sahsawānī (d. 1309) learnt calligraphy from her father, then studied Arabic grammar. She studied *Bulūgh al-marām* and some books of *Ṣaḥīḥ* and *Sunnah* with Mawlānā Muḥammad Bashīr al-Sahsawānī (14th c.), then other ḥadīth books with Shaykh Ḥusayn ibn Muḥsin al-Anṣārī (d. 1327).⁸

¹Muḥammad ʿĀshiq Ḫilāhī AL-BARNĪ, *al-ʿAnāqīd al-ghālīyah min al-asānīd al-ʿāliyah*, 175. ²LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-nisāʾ al-Yamaniyyāt*, 66. ³AL-ḤASANĪ, *Nuḥbat al-khawātir*, viii. 185. ⁴*Ibid.*, 195. ⁵LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-nisāʾ al-Yamaniyyāt*, 154. ⁶*Ibid.* ⁷*Ibid.*, 145–55. ⁸AL-ḤASANĪ, *Nuḥbat al-khawātir*, viii. 382.

Some women also became interested in the study of books of *taṣawwuf*. Mas'adah bint Aḥmad ibn Hādī ibn Aḥmad al-Haddār, for example, was well-known for her study of books like *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* of al-Ghazālī (d. 505), *Awārif al-ma'ārif* of al-Suhrawardī (d. 632), and for having memorized *Forty Ḥadīths* of al-Nabhānī (d. 1350).¹

THE KINDS OF THE BOOKS THEY STUDIED

In this section, I try to describe briefly, with examples, the kinds of ḥadīth works the women studied, beginning with the *Muwattā* of Imām Mālik b. Anas. There is not enough space here to show with examples how intensive and extensive the reading material that some of the women studied was. The quantity is remarkable, even astonishing, and far exceeds what many ḥadīth scholars of our time would consider 'a lot'. To allow readers to get some sense of the scale, I have set out the list of the reading (with her teachers' names) of Umm Hānī bint Nūr al-Dīn al-Hūriniyyah (d. 871): it will be found at the end of this chapter.

al-Muwattā

The *Muwattā* of Imām Mālik (d. 179) is the first major book combining ḥadīth and *fiqh*. It has been widely accepted by the community in all parts of the Islamic world; many have memorized it – among them, notably, Fāṭimah, the daughter of Imām Mālik, and Imām al-Shāfi'ī. Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 574) studied the whole of it;² Daw' al-Ṣabāḥ Ajībah al-Bāqdāriyyah studied it in the narration of al-Qa'nabī from Yaḥyā ibn Thābit (d. 566);³ Khadījah (d. 873) bint Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Anṣārī from Egypt studied it in the narration of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā, with al-'Izz ibn Abī l-Yumn al-Kuwayk.⁴

¹ LEDER *et al.*, *Mu'jam al-nisā' al-Yamaniyyāt*, 180. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, xxiii. 451. ³ DĪYĀ' AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 383. ⁴ AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmī'*, xii. 29.

al-Jawāmiʿ

Jawāmiʿ (plural of *jāmiʿ*), refers to the comprehensive compilations of ḥadīth that contain all the needed divisions of ḥadīth: belief, *ʿibādah*, transactions, contracts, *ṣuḥd*, manners, *tafsīr*, *siyar*, history, *fitan*, *manāqib* etc. The most famous such compilations are three of the Six Books: namely, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, and *al-Jāmiʿ* of al-Tirmidhī.

As I noted earlier, the women's interest in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* began in the fourth century and has been sustained throughout the centuries. The number of women who studied it is huge. I have given some examples; here is another: the great shaykhah of Isfahan, Umm al-Bahā' Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Abī Saʿd al-Aṣbahānī (d. 539) studied it with Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār.¹ Some women studied only a part of the book: for example, Āminah bint al-Muʿayyad Abī Bakr ibn al-ʿAmīd (7th c.), who read it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī.² Interest in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* was only a little less. The renowned Nishapuri scholar, Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Hasan ʿAlī (d. 532) studied it with its most famous teacher of her time, Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ghāfir al-Fārisī.³ Interest in the *Jāmiʿ* of al-Tirmidhī blossomed much later. The list of all its women students would be very long. One of them was Zaynab bint Makkī (d. 688), who read it with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrazad.⁴

On the following pages, three linked charts show the transmission of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to women up to 816. There were thousands who heard this very difficult book from its author. In later times people naturally went to the longest-lived of the most competent narrators in order to get the highest *isnād*. The most sought-after narrator from al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Maṭar al-Firabrī, lived around 65 years after the imām's death. Chart 1a goes through him; Charts 1b and 1c start with him.

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Ibar*, ii. 457. ² IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, ii. 399. ³ AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, *al-Taḥbīr*, ii. 256. ⁴ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 372.

Chart 1a. Transmission of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to women
from Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarqand)
to *ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī* (d. 816)

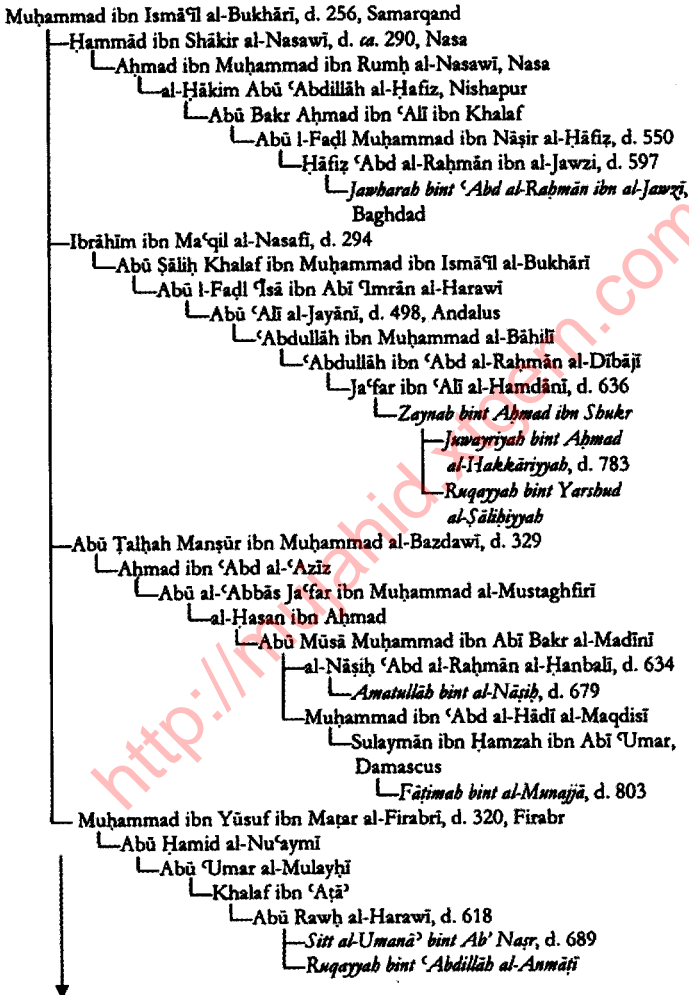


Chart 1b. Transmission of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to women
from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarqand)
to 'Ā'ishah bint 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 816)

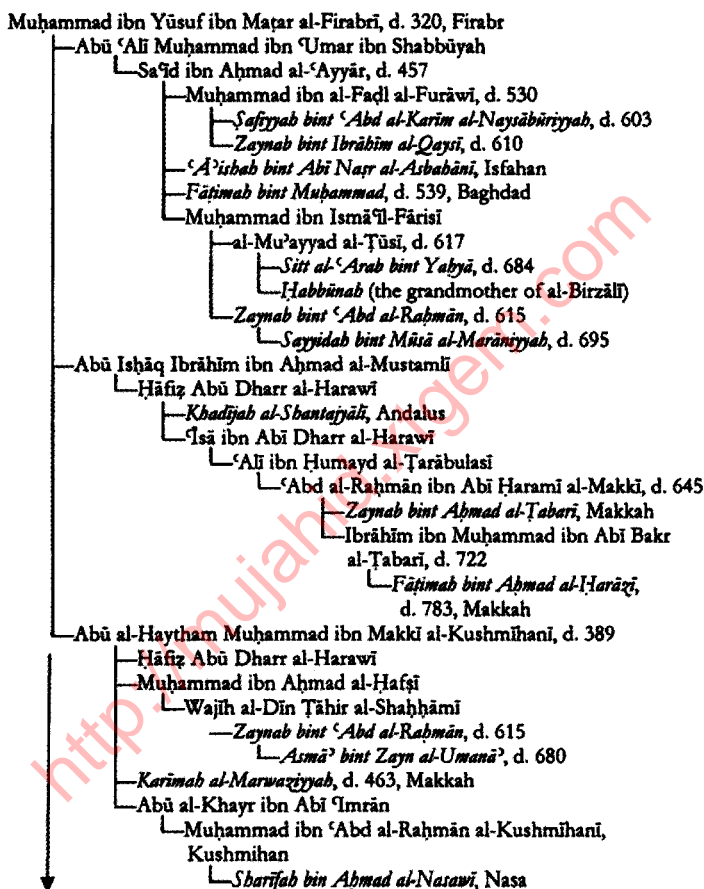
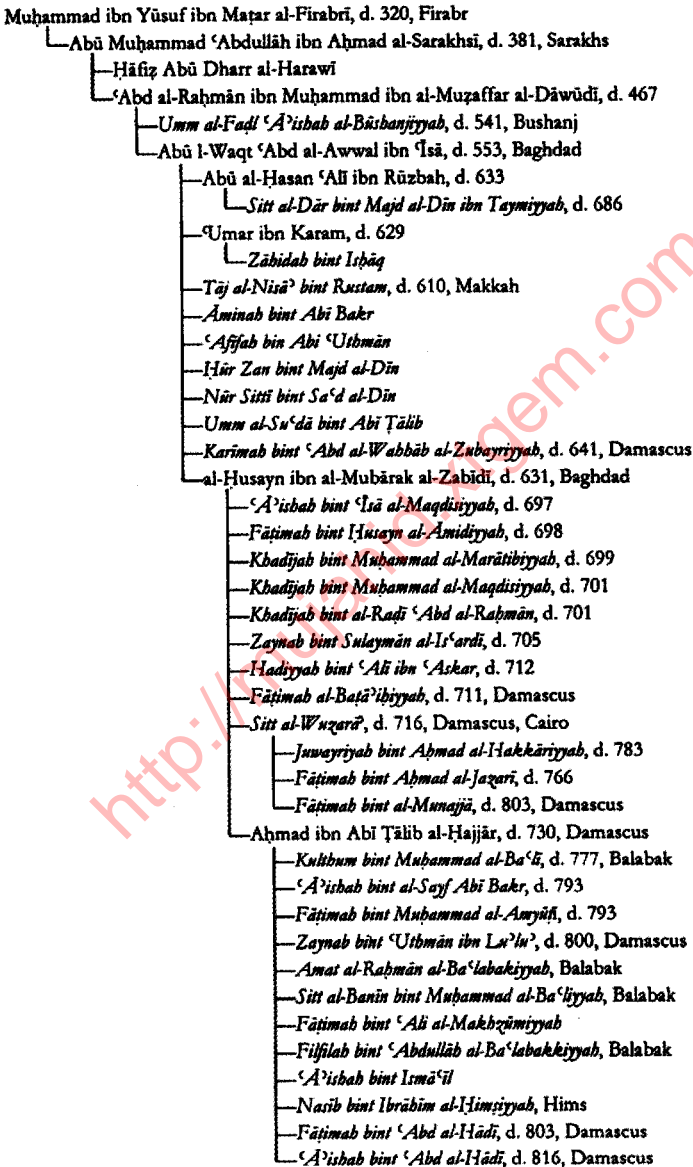


Chart 1c. Transmission of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to women
from Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256, Samarqand)
to 'Ā'ishah bint 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 816)



al-Sunan

The *Sunan*, like the *Jawāmiʿ*, are compilations of ḥadīths by topic arranged according to the divisions of *fiqh* – like *ṭabārah*, *ṣalāh*, *ṣakāh*, ḥajj etc. – but are restricted to Prophetic ḥadīth only, and exclude *tafsīr*, history and other topics covered in the *Jawāmiʿ*.

Of many book compiled on this pattern, three make up the Six Books: *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275), Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasaʿī (d. 303), of Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Mājah al-Qazwīnī (d. 273). Of almost equally high repute are: *Sunan* of ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar al-Dāraquṭnī (d. 385) and *Sunan al-kabīr* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 485). Many women studied these *Sunan*. One example for each must suffice:

Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrānī (d. 688) studied *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrazad.¹ ʿĀminah bint Taqī al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Wāsiṭī (d. 740) studied with her father *Sunan al-Nasaʿī* in the narration of Ibn al-Sunnī.² Ṣafiyyah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 699) studied *Sunan Ibn Mājah* with Imām Muwaffaq al-Dīn ibn Qudāmah.³ Faṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Muqaddam studied *Sunan al-Dāraquṭnī*.⁴ Sitt Quraysh Faṭimah bint Taqī al-Dīn ibn Fahd (d. 879) studied *Sunan al-kabīr* of al-Bayhaqī with Nūr al-Dīn ibn Salāmah.⁵

al-Masānid

Masānid (pl. of *musnad*) refers to compilations of ḥadīth arranged by names of Companions and others who narrated them, rather than by topic. This reflects increasing interest in the scholarly references that come with the ḥadīth texts, rather than their relevance for the different divisions of *fiqh*. Among the famous *masānid* are: the *Musnads* of Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150), al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204), al-Ḥumaydī (d. 219), Musaddad ibn Musharhad (d. 228), Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), of ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd (d. 249), and Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī (d. 307). Again, just one example for each:

¹ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dbayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 372. ² *Ibid.*, 359–60. ³ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁴ KAḤḤĀLAH, *Aʿlām al-nisāʾ*, iv. 135. ⁵ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Minjam fi-l-muʿjam*, 123.

Daw' al-Ṣabāḥ Ajībah (d. 647) learnt *Musnad Abī Ḥanīfah*, in the version of Abī Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Ḥārithī, from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Bāghbān;¹ she studied *Musnad al-Shāfiʿī* with Abū Zurʿah Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (d. 566),² and *Musnad al-Ḥumaydī* with two teachers: Abū l-Ḥasan Saʿdullāh ibn Naṣr al-Dajājī and Abū l-Maʿālī Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Bājisrāʾī.³ Umm al-Ḥayā Zuhrah bint Muḥammad al-Anbārī (d. 633) studied *Musnad Musaddad ibn Musharad* with Yaḥyā ibn Thābit ibn Bundār.⁴ Zaynab bint Makkī (d. 688) studied *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* with Ḥanbal ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Ruṣāfi.⁵ Asmā' bint Ibrāhīm ibn Sufyān ibn Mandah al-Aṣbahāniyyah (d. 630) studied *Musnad ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd* with Abū l-Waqt ʿAbd al-Awwal ibn ʿĪsā al-Ḥarawī.⁶ Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) studied *Musnad Abī Yaʿlā* with Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir.⁷ (For the names of other women who studied the *Musnad* of Ibn Ḥanbal, see Chart 2 on the next page.)

al-Maʿājim and al-Mashyakhāt

Maʿājim (pl. of *muʿjam*): a compilation in which the ḥadīths are arranged according to the names of the Companions or other narrators or of the cities that they were most associated with. *Mashyakhāt* (pl. of *mashyakhah*): an arrangement of ḥadīths by the shaykhs or teachers of those ḥadīths. Fāṭimah bint ʿAbdillāh al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 524) studied al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr* and *al-Muʿjam al-ṣagḥīr* with their most famous narrator, Ibn Rīdhah.⁸ Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī studied *al-Muʿjam al-awsaṭ* of al-Ṭabarānī with Abū Naṣr ibn al-Shīrāzī.⁹ (See Chart 3 on the next page.)

¹IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 482–83. ²TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FASĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, ii. 383. ³AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *Mashyakhah*, MS, 44. ⁴TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FASĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, ii. 366. ⁵*Ibid.*, ii. 372. ⁶*Ibid.*, ii. 357. ⁷IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 482–83. ⁸AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xix. 505. ⁹IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 375.

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, d. 241

└ 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, d. 290

└ Abū Bakr al-Qaṣī, d. 368

└ Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Tamīmī, d. 444

└ Dalāl bint Abī al-Faḍl ibn al-Muḥtadī, d. 508

└ Hibatullāh al-Shaybānī, d. 525

└ Daw' al-Ṣabāḥ bint al-Mubārak, d. 585, Baghdad

└ Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Wabbāḥ, d. 588, Baghdad

└ Abū al-Qāsim Yahyā ibn Bawsh, d. 593, Baghdad

└ Nafīsah bint Abī Muḥammad, d. 648, Egypt

└ Abū 'Alī Ḥanbal al-Ruṣāfi, d. 604

└ Fāṭimah bint 'Imād al-Dīn, d. 683, Damascus

└ Fāṭimah bint Aḥmad al-Ayyūbī, d. 678, Aleppo

└ Umm Aḥmad 'Izzīyah, d. 661, Damascus

└ Ṣafīyah bint Ishāq, d. 643, Damascus

└ Amat al-Ḥaqq Shāmīyah, d. 685,
Damascus, Cairo

└ Asiyah bint Ḥassān, d. 676, Damascus

└ Zaynab bint Makki al-Ḥarrāniyyah, d. 688,
Damascus

└ Zaynab bint 'Umar ibn Kindī, d. 699

Chart 2. Transmission of *Musnad Ibn Ḥanbal*
from Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, d. 241
to Zaynab bint 'Umar ibn Kindī, d. 699

Imām Abū l-Qāsim Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, d. 360

└ Aḥmad ibn Fādhshāh, d. 433, Isfahan

└ Asiyah bint 'Umar al-Zujāfī

└ Abū Bakr ibn Rīdhah, d. 440, Isfahan

└ Umm al-Khayr Karīmah, Isfahan

└ Qismah bint Mibtār al-Rustamī

└ Umm al-Riḍā 'Ā'ishah, Isfahan

└ Sitt Bānīyah

└ Sittān bint al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣalībānī

└ Fāṭimah bint 'Abdillāh al-Jūzdāniyyah, d. 524, Isfahan

└ Abū al-Futūḥ As'ad al-'Ijlī, d. 600, Isfahan

└ Fāṭimah bint Aḥmad al-Ayyūbī, d. 678, Aleppo

└ As'ad ibn Rawḥ, d. 607, Isfahan

└ Amat al-Ḥaqq Shāmīyah, d. 685, Damascus, Cairo

└ Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn Kāmil, d. 687, Damascus

└ Asiyah bint Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, d. 687,
Damascus

└ Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, d. 685,
Damascus

└ Fāṭimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr, d. 600, Cairo

└ 'Ā'ishah bint Ma'mar, d. 607, Isfahan

└ Afifah al-Fārifāniyyah, d. 606, Isfahan

└ Mu'nisah bint Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, d. 693, Cairo

Chart 3. Transmission of *Mu'jam al-kabīr* to women
from Imām al-Ṭabarānī, d. 360
to Mu'nisah bint Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, d. 693

‘Ā’ishah bint Ma‘mar ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn al-Fakīr al-Aṣbahāniyyah (d. 607) received *Mu‘jam* of Abū Ya‘lā from Sa‘īd al-Ṣayrafī.¹ Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 574) received *al-Mu‘jam* of Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ismā‘īlī from Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥarīṣah.² Asmā’ bint Taqī al-Dīn al-Jā‘barī studied *al-Mu‘jam al-ṣaghīr* of al-Daqqāq with Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mizzī.³

Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah studied *Mashyakhab* of Ibn Shādhān with Abū Ghālib Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Baḳillānī (d. 500).⁴ Altī bint Baktāsh al-Rashīdī studied *Mashyakhab* of Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad al-Rāzī with three teachers – the sultan Asad al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ayyūbī, ‘Imād al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār and ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī in 736 in the Madrasah al-Murshidiyyah.⁵ In 631 Tāj-Khātūn bint al-‘Izz Abī Bakr studied *Mashyakhab Ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im* with eight teachers: Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭarkhān al-Ḥanbalī; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū ‘Alī Yūsuf ibn Isrā‘īl al-Nāṣirī; Zayn al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Alī al-Takrītī; Shihāb al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-‘Aṭṭār; Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Fāmī; Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Arab-shāh al-Farrā’; Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ni‘mah Umm Muḥammad; Sitt al-‘Arab Zaynab bint ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Maqdisī.⁶ Khadījah bint ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Mardāwī studied *Asnā al-maqāsid wa a‘dhab al-awārid*, the *Mashyakhab* of Ibn al-Bukhārī with the author himself in 682.⁷ Zuhrah bint ‘Umar al-Khutanī

¹DIYĀ’ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Tabbat al-masmū‘āt*, 87. ²IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 109–10. ³*Majmū‘* containing *Mu‘jam mashāikh Abī ‘Abdillāh al-Daqqāqī*, 321. ⁴AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihri al-fahāris*, ii. 626. ⁵See *samā‘āt* in *Majlis al-Biṭāqah* in *Amālī Ḥamzah al-Kinānī*, MS Dār al-Kutub al-Ṣāḥiriyyah, Damascus. ⁶See MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Muḥaffarī*, 468–69. ⁷IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 258–59.

studied the *Mashyakbah* of Abū Ṭālib al-ʿUshārī with Ibn Ṭab-razad.¹

al-Arbaʿūnāt

The term refers to compilations of ‘forty ḥadīths’. There are many of these selected by different scholars around themes or topics or narrators. I mention here a few of the more popular:

Asmāʾ bint Abī Bakr ibn al-Khallāl (d. 691) studied *al-Arbaʿūn* of Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aslam al-Kindī al-Ṭūsī (d. 242) with Abū l-Faḍl Jaʿfar ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥibatullāh al-Hamadhānī in 635.² Fākhīrah al-Baghdādiyyah (6th c.) learnt *al-Arbaʿūn* of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Nasāʾī from ʿAbd al-Ghāfir ibn Muḥammad al-Fārisī.³ Umm al-Bahāʾ Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Faḍl Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (d. 539) received *al-Arbaʿūn* of al-Jawzaqī Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdillāh (d. 388) from Abū ʿUthmān Saʿīd ibn Abī Saʿīd al-ʿAyyān al-Ṣūfī.⁴ Umm al-Faḍl Muʾminah bint Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd studied *al-Arbaʿūn* of Abū Bakr ibn al-Muqṛī with Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn ʿAbd al-Mālik al-Khallād, and Abū Muḥammad Bakhtiyār ibn Muḥammad in 532.⁵

Later, Imām Nawawī’s *al-Arbaʿūn* became the most popular. Sutaytah bint al-Zayn Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad (d. 879) studied it with her father in 792.⁶

al-Ajzāʾ

Ajzāʾ (plural of *juzʾ*) meaning component section of something, here referring to the ḥadīths of just one person or ḥadīths collected on just one topic. The number of *ajzāʾ* grew to thousands. From the beginning of the fourth century onward women had great interest in studying them. Again, just a few examples must suffice.

¹*Ibid.*, i. 303. ²See LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 140, 216. ³DIYĀʾ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Tabbat al-mamuʿāt*, 78. ⁴*Ibid.*, 123. ⁵See *samāʿāt* at the end of *al-Arbaʿūn* of Ibn al-Muqṛī in TAKLAH, *Jamharah al-Ajzāʾ al-ḥadīthiyyah*, 135–36. ⁶AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Dawʾ al-lāmīʿ*, xii. 60.

Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah studied the most famous *Juzʿ ibn ʿArafah* with its highest narrator Ibn Bayān;¹ *Juzʿ Hanbal* with Abū l-Ḥasan ibn al-Ṭuyūrī² and *Juzʿ Hilāl al-Ḥaffār* with Ṭirād.³ Zaynab bint Makkī al-Ḥarrānī (d. 688) studied the *juzʿ* with next highest *isnād*, *al-Ghaylāniyyāt*, with ʿUmar ibn Ṭabrazad.⁴ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Yaḥyā al-Kindī (d. 684) studied the third highest, *Juzʿ al-Anṣārī* with her master Abū l-Yumn al-Kindī.⁵ Amat al-Ḥamīd Khadījah bint Abī Ghānim studied *Juzʿ mā qaruba* of al-Samarqandī (d. 536) in 529.⁶ Umm al-Ḍiyāʾ Sitt al-Jalīl bint Abī l-Ḥusayn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Warkānī (6th c.) studied *Juzʿ Luwayn* with Abū Bakr ibn Mājah.⁷ Umm al-Bahāʾ Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn Abī Saʿd al-Baghdādī (d. 539) received *Juzʿ al-Bayṭūta* from Saʿīd al-ʿAyyār.⁸ Nūr Sittī bint ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (6th c.) studied *Kitāb Thawāb al-ʿmāl* of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥātim al-Rāzī with her grandfather Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Bayāḍī.⁹ Umm al-Khayr Jamāl al-Nisāʾ bint Abī Bakr al-Baghdādiyyah studied *Juzʿ Ibn al-Baṭṭī* with its author Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Baṭṭī.¹⁰ Khadījah bint Abī Bakr al-Ḥamawī studied *Aḥādīth Ṭālūt* of Abū ʿUthmān Ṭālūt ibn ʿAbbād al-Ṣayrafī (d. 238) with ʿAbd al-Jalīl ibn Abī Ghālīb al-Surayjānī in a *ribāt* of Damascus in 610.¹¹ Umm al-Ḥayā Zuhrah bint Muḥammad al-Anbārī (d. 633) studied *Juzʿ al-Bānyāsī* with Ibn al-Baṭṭī.¹² Zaynab bint ʿAlī al-Wāsiṭī (d. 695) studied *Majlis al-Bitāqah* of Abū l-Qāsim Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī (d. 357) with Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl,

¹ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 504–16. ² See *samāʿāt* at the end of *Juzʿ Hanbal*. ³ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 276–77. ⁴ ḌIYĀʾ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 372. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 288. ⁶ See *samāʿāt* in *Muqaddimah* of *Juzʿ mā qaruba sanadu-hu min ḥadīth* of Abī l-Qāsim Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad al-Samarqandī. ⁷ AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, *al-Tabḥīr*, ii. 242. ⁸ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 158. ⁹ AL-SAMʿĀNĪ, *al-Muntakab min Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, iii. 1923. ¹⁰ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, 248. ¹¹ LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 119, 290. ¹² IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 214–21, and *al-Muʿjam al-muʿassas*, 238–40.

Khaṭīb Mardā in 653.¹ Umm ‘Abd al-Ḥakam Sitt al-‘Ibād bint Abī l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Salāmah al-Miṣriyyah (d. 616) studied *al-Khila‘iyyāt* with its famous narrator Ibn Rifā‘ah.² Khadijah bint ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn ‘Uthmān studied *Juḥd al-Fīl* with Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Maqdisī and ‘Izz al-Dīn Abū l-Fidā’ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Farrā’ in 693 in al-Jāmi‘ al-Muẓaffarī in Qāsyūn.³

al-Musalsalāt

The term *musalsal* refers to a ḥadīth around the narration of which there is some particular association that the tradition has deemed worthy of preserving, along with the ḥadīth itself. An example would be the Prophet’s shaking someone’s hand just before he said what the ḥadīth records, or giving them a date and water, etc.; then, each time that this ḥadīth is passed on the teacher will shake the student’s hand, or give out a date and water, etc. Much charm and pleasure is added to the teaching and learning of ḥadīths by these associations, and remembering one’s lessons is facilitated by them. There are many ḥadīths narrated as *musalsalāt*.

al-Musalsal bi-l-‘anwaliyyah. This is the ḥadīth of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ that the Prophet *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa-sallam* said: ‘Those who show mercy, the Most Merciful bestows mercy upon them. Show mercy to those who are in the earth, the One who is in heaven will have mercy upon you.’ It is narrated from Ibn ‘Uyaynah, who narrated it from ‘Amr ibn Dīnār, from Abū Qābūs, from his master ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ. His student ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Bishr al-Ḥakam heard it from him as his first ḥadīth; then it became a tradition that students would hear this as their first ḥadīth from their teachers. It has continued to this day. There are many women who received this ḥadīth. Here are some examples: Ḥasanah bint Muḥammad ibn Kāmil

¹LEDER *et al.*, *Mu‘jam al-samā‘āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 33, 314. ²AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām (sub anno 611–620)*, 291. ³See MUṬĪ‘ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Muẓaffarī*, 291.

al-Ḥasaniyyah (d. 765) heard it from al-Tawzarī through the *isnād* of Ibn al-Samarqandī.¹ Umm al-Ḥasan bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Makhzūmī heard this ḥadīth with her sister Ṣafīyyah from al-Sharīf Abū l-Khayr ibn Abī ‘Abdillāh al-Makhzūmī in 742.² Khadijah bint Abī Bakr ibn ‘Alī known as Bint al-Kūrī (d. 803) heard it from Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥarrānī.³ Zaynab bint Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū l-Abbād Aḥmad ibn Zāhirah al-Qurashī (d. 863) heard it from the qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Murāghī.⁴ Ghazāl Umm ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Nūbiyyah (d. 802) heard it from its famous narrator al-Maydūmī (d. 754).⁵

Some traditionists compiled the *musalsalāt* they received from their teachers as books, which made it easier to study and transmit them. Women also heard some of these books of *musalsalāt* with their teachers. Sitt al-‘Arab bint Muḥammad ibn Fakhr al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) heard *Musalsalāt al-Ibrāhīmī* from her grandfather.⁶ Umm Kulthūm ‘Ā’ishah bint Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Murshidī (d. 846) heard *Musalsal al-‘Alā’ī* from Majd al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī.⁷ Fāṭimah bint al-Munajjā heard *Nuḥbat al-ḥuffāẓ* of Abū Mūsā al-Madīnī from Taqī al-Dīn Sulaymān ibn Ḥamzah.⁸ Shuhdah al-Baghdādiyyah studied *al-Muṣāfaḥah* of al-Barqānī.⁹ Umm Muḥammad Sitt al-Kull Āsiyah bint Jarullāh Muḥammad al-Makkī studied *Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah* and *Musalsal li-kebatm l-du‘ā’* with Sharaf al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim al-Rāfi‘.¹⁰

¹DIYĀ’ AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *al-Iqd al-thamīn*, vi. 377. ²IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 157. ³AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmī*, xii. 26. ⁴IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 1434. ⁵AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmī*, xii. 85. ⁶IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma’ al-mu’assas*, iii. 42–28. IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 157. ⁷IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma’ al-mu’assas*, iii. 360. ⁸AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xxiii. 88. ⁹IBN FAHD, *K. Nayl al-Munā*, i. 217–18.

THE READING LIST OF

UMM HĀNĪ BINT NŪR AL-DĪN AL-HŪRĪNIYYAH (d. 871)¹

She studied:

with Najm al-Din ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb b. ‘Abd al-Karīm b. al-Ḥusayn b. Razīn and Ṣalāḥ al-Din Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Umar al-Zaftāwī: *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*

with ‘Afif al-Dīn ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-Nashāwarī: *Sunan Abī Dāwūd • al-Arba‘īn al-Mukharrajah min Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī bi riwāyat al-Muḥammadīn min ḥadīth Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. ‘Alī ibn Yāsir al-Jayānī • Juḡ’* from *Fawā’id Abī Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Ubaydillāh al-Ḥarfī • Juḡ’* with *Manām Ḥamṣah b. Ḥabīb al-Zayyāt min ḥadīth Ibn Ghalbūn • Juḡ’* with *Ḥadīth Ḥalimah al-Sa‘diyyah li-Abī l-Ḥasan b. Ṣakbr • Juḡ’* from *Ḥadīth ‘Alī b. Ḥarb al-Ṭā’i • Juḡ’* with *Gharā’ib al-asānīd li-Abī l-Ghanā’im al-Narsī • al-Arba‘īn al-mukhtārāh fī fadl khibāl al-ḥajj wa-l-ḥijrah li-Ibn Mas‘ūdī • al-Juḡ’ al-thānī min Ḥadīth Sa‘dān b. Naṣr • Fawā’id al-‘Irāqīyyīn li-l-Naqqāsh • al-Arba‘īn al-Subā‘iyyāt li-‘Abd al-Mun‘im b. ‘Abdillāh al-Furāwī • Sudāsiyyāt Abī ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Rāzī • Juḡ’ al-Jumū‘ah li-l-Nasā’i • Juḡ’ Ibn Nujayd • al-Majālis al-khamsah al-sudāsiyyāt • ‘Awālī Ṭirād in two juḡ’ (takebrīj al-Bardānī) • Maqāsid al-sawm li-l-Imām ‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām • Juḡ’ with *Majlisān fī fadl Rajab min imlā’ al-Ḥāfiḡ Abū l-Qāsim b. ‘Asākir • Juḡ’* with *al-Ṭaqbīl wa-l-mu‘ānaqah wa-l-muṣāfahah li-Abī Sa‘īd Muḥammad b. Ziyād al-‘Arabī • Juḡ’* with *Ḥadīth al-Qāḍī Abū l-Faraj al-Mu‘aḥḥab b. Zakariyyā • Juḡ’* with *‘Awālī Abī l-Waqt ‘Abd al-Awwal b. ‘Isā al-Harawī (takebrīj Abī Muḥammad Yūnus b. Yahyā al-Ḥāshimī) • Juḡ’* with *Faḍl Ramaḍān siyāmi-hi wa-qiyāmi-hi li-Abī l-Yumn ‘Abdillāh b. al-Imām Abī l-Ḥasan b. ‘Asākir • Juḡ’* with *Ḥadīth Dhī l-Nūn al-Miṣrī • Nuskhah Abī Mu‘awiyah Muḥammad b. Khāzim al-Darīr • Juḡ’* with *Ḥadīth Abī Bakr b. Abī Dāwūd... • al-Juḡ’ al-sābi‘ min Ḥadīth Abī ‘Amr b. al-Sammāke (intiqā’ Abī Ḥafṣ al-Baṣrī) • al-Arba‘īn al-Thaqafīyyah • Mas’alat al-ijāzah li-l-majhūl wa-l-ma’dūm li-l-Khaṭīb • Juḡ’* containing *Faḍl Rajab wa-ghayri-hi li-l-Khallāl • al-Majālis al-Makkiyyah li-l-Mayyāshī • Khumasiyyāt Ibn al-Naqqūr • Juḡ’ Kākū • Juḡ’* with *Majlisān min Amālī al-Wazīr Niḡām al-Mulke • al-Arba‘īn li-Abī ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Furāwī • Juḡ’* with *al-Mi’at al-‘awālī min masmu‘āti-hi • Masā’il Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-‘Alā min al-Imām al-**

¹ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Muḥjam fī l-muḥjam*, 101–03.

Shāfi'ī raḍī al-lāhu 'an-hu • Juḡ' Abī Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Abdillāh b. Sulaymān al-Ḥaḍramī • Juḡ' al-Biṭāqah • al-Juḡ' al-sabī' min Musalsalāt al-Ḥāfiẓ Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Masaddī al-Mushtamil 'alā l-musalsal bi-l-ʿadd fi l-yad • Faḍl Shaʿbān li-l-Imām Abī 'Abdillāh Muḥammad b. Ismāʿil b. Abī l-Ṣayf al-Yamanī • Qirā al-dayf li-Ibn Abī l-Dunyā • al-Sīrah li-l-Ṭabarī • Musalsalāt Ibn Shādhbān • Tusāʿiyyāt al-Raḍī al-Ṭabarī • Fadā'il Rajab li-Abī Muḥammad al-Khallāl

with Abū l-Faraj b. al-Shaykhah: *al-Arbaʿin al-mawsumah bi shiʿār aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth li-l-Ḥākim • Juḡ' with Anāshīd Abī Ghālib Shujā' b. Fāris al-Dhublī*

with Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Muʿṭī al-Makkī al-Mālikī: *Tusāʿiyyāt al-Raḍī al-Ṭabarī • al-Juḡ' al-sabī' min Musalsalāt Ibn Masaddī • Faḍl Shaʿbān li-Ibn Abī l-Ṣayf • Juḡ' al-Biṭāqah*

with Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ḥāhīrah: *al-Arbaʿin al-mukhtārah li-Ibn Masaddī • al-Awwal min Musalsalāt al-ʿAllāf*, and a *juḡ'* containing *al-Muslasal bi-innī uḥibbu-ka* of Raḍī al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī.

with Muḥibb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. al-Raḍī Ibrāhīm al-Ṭabarī: *Musalsalāt al-Dibāʿī*

with Abī 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Dhubā al-Miṣrī: *al-Ghaylāniyyāt*.



Interior. Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyyah, Damascus.
(Photo: Yahya Michot)

Chapter 6

Women's role in diffusion of 'the knowledge'

The women who had knowledge of the religion transmitted that knowledge to men as well as women. Indeed, given that the majority of students of ḥadīth were men, we would expect the majority of the women's students to have been men. Their numbers varied in different periods, but in some periods were very high: for example, al-Dhahabī in his account of Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Najjār (d. 643) reports from Ibn al-Sā'ātī that '[Ibn al-Najjār's] teachers included 3000 men and 400 women.'¹ It should suffice as evidence of the authority of women in preserving and transmitting the *Sunnah* of God's Messenger that some of the greatest of his Companions and, after them, some of the greatest imāms and jurists in the history of Islamic scholarship relied on women teachers.

THE COMPANIONS AND THE SCHOLARS AFTER THEM

Among the Companions who narrated from 'Ā'ishah are: her father, Abū Bakr; 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb; 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar; Abū Hurayrah; Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī; 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās; Rabī'ah ibn 'Amr al-Jurashī; al-Sā'ib ibn Yazīd; 'Amr ibn al-'Ās; Zayd ibn Khālīd al-Juhanī; 'Abdullāh ibn 'Āmir ibn Rabī'ah; 'Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Nawfal and others. In addition, in the major compilations of ḥadīth, there are over 300 narrators from 'Ā'ishah: al-Mizzī has listed them, in alphabetical order,

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Sīyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, xxiii. 133.

together with references to the books where their ḥadīths are recorded.¹ Among the men scholars who narrated from Umm Salamah are: Usāmah ibn Zayd ibn Ḥārithah al-Kalbī, al-Aswad ibn Yazīd al-Nakha'ī, Ḥabīb ibn Abī Thābit, Humayd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Dhakwān Abū Šālīḥ al-Sammān, Sa'īd ibn Abī Sa'īd al-Maqburī, Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab, Sulaymān ibn Yasār, Abū Wā'il Shaqīq ibn Salamah al-Asadī, 'Āmir al-Sha'bi, 'Abdullāh ibn Buraydah al-Aslamī, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Šiddīq, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Ubaydullāh ibn Abī Mulaykah, 'Abdullāh ibn Wahb ibn Zam'ah, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Abdullāh ibn 'Utbah, 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, 'Aṭā' ibn Abī Rabāḥ, 'Aṭā' ibn Yasār, 'Ikrimah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, Kurayb the *mawlā* of Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid ibn Jabr al-Makkī, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn, Masrūq ibn al-Ajda', Nāfi' the *mawlā* of Ibn 'Umar, Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, Abū Salamah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Awf, Abū 'Uthmān al-Nahdī.² Among the narrators from Ḥafṣah are: Ḥārithah ibn Wahb al-Khuzā'ī, her brother 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Hishām, Abū Bakr ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī Khaythamah and others.³

The Companions narrated also from women other than the wives of the Prophet. 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, a prominent figure of knowledge among the Companions narrated from Maymūnah, a slave of the Prophet.⁴ From Durrah bint Abī Lahab, 'Alī narrated that she said that the Messenger of God, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*, said: 'No living person should be given hurt through [criticism of] a dead person.'⁵ The Umayyad caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz narrated: 'The righteous woman, Khawlah bint Ḥakīm, the wife of 'Uthmān ibn Maẓ'ūn narrated that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – came out holding in his arms the two sons of his daughter saying: 'By God, you cause [one to be] undisciplined (*tujabbilū-nā*), cowardly (*tujabbīnū-*

¹AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 228–33. ²*Ibid.*, 317–19. ³*Ibid.*, 154.

⁴*Ibid.*, 313. ⁵IBN 'ABD AL-BARR, *al-Istī'āb*, ii. 726.

nā) and miserly (*tubakḥḥilū-na*); and [yet also] you are indeed as a flower of Paradise.¹ The great *tābiʿī* scholar Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab also narrated from Khawlah bint Ḥakīm. ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī narrated from Rāyidah bint Karāmah.²

In the next generation, Muḥammad ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124) narrated ḥadīth from ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Saʿd ibn Zurārah al-Anṣāriyyah, Nadbah the *mawlāh* of Maymūnah, Fāṭimah al-Khuzāʿiyyah, Hind bint al-Ḥārith al-Fārisiyyah and Umm ʿAbdillāh al-Ḍawsiyyah. Yahyā ibn Maʿīn narrated that Abū Ḥanīfah narrated from ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAjrad that she said: ‘I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: The largest army of God in the earth are locusts. I do not eat them and I do not forbid them.’³ Imām Mālik (d. 179) narrated from ʿĀʾishah bint Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ al-Madaniyyah (d. 117). Among other narrators from her are: Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUqbah, Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī, al-Juʿayd ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, Junāḥ al-Najjār, al-Ḥakam ibn ʿUṭaybah, Khuzaymah, Ṣakhr ibn Juwayriyyah, Abū l-Zinād ʿAbdullāh ibn Dhakwān, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUbaydah al-Rabadhī, ʿUthmān ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Waqqāṣī, Abū Qudāmah ʿUthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUbaydillāh ibn ʿUmar al-ʿUmārī, Muḥammad ibn Bijād ibn Mūsā ibn Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, Muhājir ibn Mismār, Yūsuf ibn Yaʿqūb ibn al-Mājishūn and others.⁴

MAJOR SCHOLARS WHO NARRATED FROM WOMEN

We find the same practice in the succeeding centuries. Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241), Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjumānī (d. 236), Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Jarjarāʾī (d. 240), Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Harawī (d. 244) and ʿAlī ibn Muslim al-Ṭūṣī (d. 253) narrated from Umm ʿUmar bint Ḥassān ibn Zayd al-Thaqafi.⁵

¹IBN BISHKWĀL, *Ghawāmiḍ al-asmāʾ al-mubḥāmah*, i. 272–73. ²IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyiz al-ṣaḥābah*, iv. 299. ³IBN AL-ATHĪR, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vii. 190. ⁴AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 236. ⁵AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 432.

Qāḍī Abū Ya'qūb al-Farrā' (d. 458), al-Azhārī, al-Tanūkhī, al-Ḥusayn ibn Ja'far al-Salmāsī, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ḥasnūn al-Narsī and Abū Khāzim ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Farrā' narrated from Amat al-Salām bint al-Qāḍī Abī Bakr Aḥmad ibn Kāmil ibn Khalaf ibn Shajarah al-Baghdādīyyah (d. 390).¹

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571) narrated from over 80 women, and dedicated a whole book to biographical accounts of them. His colleague Abū Sa'd al-Sam'ānī (d. 562) wrote down accounts of 69 women from whom he heard ḥadīth directly or who wrote *ijāzabs* to him. Ḥāfiẓ Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī (d. 576) studied ḥadīth with tens of women scholars, Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597) narrated from three, and Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī (d. 600) narrated from 'a number'.

In the seventh century, Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630), Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643), and al-Ḍiyā' al-Maqdisī (d. 643), all narrated from several women teachers. Ḥāfiẓ al-Mundhirī (d. 656) narrated from a large number of women and provided accounts of them in *al-Takmilah li wafayāt al-naqalah*, and Muḥibb al-Ṭabrī (d. 694) also narrated from 'a number' of women.

Imām Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728), probably the greatest thinker and jurist of his time, received ḥadīth from a number of women and included some ḥadīths from them in his *Forty Ḥadīths*. He expressed very high esteem for their knowledge, understanding and intelligence, as well as their righteousness and piety, and he praised some of them fulsomely for their efforts in preaching and reform. Similarly, the following imāms studied with women: Ibn Jamā'ah (d. 733); Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734); Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī (d. 742) narrated from some of them in his *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*; Imām al-Dhahabī (d. 748) narrated from them in *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*, *Tārīkh al-Islām*, and *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*; Imām Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751); Ḥāfiẓ al-'Alā'ī (d. 761); Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771) narrated from them and provided accounts of them in his *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*; likewise: Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr (d. 774); al-

¹*Ibid.*, 443.

Zarkashī (d. 794); Ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī (d. 795); al-Bulqīnī (d. 805); Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Faḍl al-ʿIrāqī (d. 806); Ḥāfiẓ Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī (d. 807); Ḥāfiẓ Walī al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 826). Ḥāfiẓ Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī (d. 832) mentioned some women teachers in his *Dhayl al-Taḳyīd* and other books; Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 833) mentioned some of them in his *Taʾrīkh*; Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852) mentioned them in his *Muʿjam* and gave accounts of them in *al-Durar al-kāminah* and *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*; Najm al-Dīn Ibn Fahd (d. 885) provided accounts of his women teachers in his *Muʿjam*; so too Ḥāfiẓ Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902) in *al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ*; and Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī narrated from them and wrote biographical notices on them in his *Muʿjam* and other books.

HUSBANDS NARRATING FROM THEIR WIVES

Some of the *muḥaddithāt* attained such eminence in the knowledge that it is unsurprising to find their husbands becoming their students and referring to them for the solution of different scholarly and juristic issues. Hishām ibn Saʿīd narrated that he called on Muʿādh ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Ḥabīb al-Juhānī: ‘Muʿādh asked his wife: When should the child pray? She said: A man from our people mentioned from the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam* – that he was asked about that and he said: When [the child] knows his right from his left, command him to pray.’¹ Karīmah bint al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad al-Kindīyyah (*tābiʿiyyah*) is another example of a woman whose husband ʿAbdullāh ibn Wahb ibn Zamʿah narrated from her.² Ishāq ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Abī Talḥah narrated from his wife Umm Yaḥyā Ḥumaydah bint Ubayy ibn Rifāʿah al-Anṣārīyyah al-Zuraqīyyah.³

Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir ibn al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām is considered one of the great scholars and jurists among the

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāḥ*, bāb *matā yuʿmaru al-ghulām bi-l-ṣalāḥ*. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *Tabdhīb al-tabdhīb*, xii. 475. ³ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 159.

Successors to the Companions. She knew a lot of ḥadīths, mostly through her grandmother Asmā' bint Abī Bakr. Great imāms narrated from her including Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, the author of the famous *Sīrah*. Most of her ḥadīths that are found in all the major compilations are through her husband Hishām ibn 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr, one of the teachers of Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Shu'bah, Sufyān al-Thawrī and others. I will mention here a few examples of her ḥadīths narrated by her husband. Hishām narrated from his wife Fāṭimah from her grandmother Asmā' that she said: 'A woman came to the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and said: 'O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – I have a daughter who is a bride: she has a disease (*ḥaṣbah*) that has thinned her hair. Can I join [another's hair] to it? The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: The curse of God is on the one who joins [another's hair in this way] and the one who asks for [this].' (This ḥadīth is narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasa'ī and Ibn Mājah.¹) Hishām says: 'Fāṭimah narrated to me from Asmā' that she said: 'We ate meat of one of our horses in the time of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*.'² Hishām narrated from Fāṭimah from Asmā' that she said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said to me: Give [of your wealth], spend [from it] and pay out; do not cling to it, otherwise God will hold it over you; do not count [it] otherwise God will count [it] over you.'³ Hishām also narrated from her the long ḥadīth, found in the

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Libās*, bāb *al-waṣl fi al-sha'r*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Libās*, bāb *tahrim fi l-al-wāṣilah wa-l-mustawṣilah wa-l-wāshimah*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Zīnah*, b. *la'n al-wāṣilah wa-l-mustawṣilah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *al-wāṣilah wa-l-mustawṣilah*. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Dhabā'ih*, bāb *al-naḥr wa al-dhibḥ*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣayd wa-l-dhabā'ih*, bāb *fi akl luḥūm al-ḥayl*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *al-ḍaḥāyā*, bāb *al-ruḥṣah fi naḥr ma yudḥbah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Dhabā'ih*, bāb *luḥūm al-ḥayl*. ³ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Zakāh*, bāb *al-tahriḍ 'alā al-ṣadaqah*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Zakāh*, bāb *al-ḥathth 'alā l-infāq wa karāhat al-iḥṣā'*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Zakāh*, bāb *al-iḥṣā' fi l-ṣadaqah*.

Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, about the prayer on the occasion of solar eclipse.¹

Fāṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Aḥmad al-Samarqandī (d. 540) the author of *Tuhfat al-fuqahā*, was herself a great scholar and jurist, and renowned for it. She was married to ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn Mas‘ūd al-Kāsānī, the author of *Badā’i’ al-ṣanā’i’*. Ibn al-‘Adīm says: ‘My father narrated that she used to quote the Ḥanafī *madhhab* (doctrine) very well. Her husband al-Kāsānī sometimes had some doubts and erred in the [issuing of a] fatwa; then she would tell him the correct opinion and explain the reason for [his] mistake.’² An example from the ninth century is Fāṭimah bint Yahyā. Al-Shawkānī (d. 1255) says about her: ‘She was famous for her knowledge. She had debates with her father on several juristic issues. He father the imām confirmed that Fāṭimah applies *ijtihād* in deriving rulings. This indicates that she was prominent in the knowledge for the imām would not say something like that except for one who deserved it.’³ Her father married her to al-Muṭahhar ibn Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān ibn Muḥammad (d. 879), who referred to her in the judgement of difficult juristic issues. Whenever a complicated issue was brought to him and to his students he would go to his wife and seek the solution from her. His students would then say: ‘This is not from you. This is from behind the curtain.’⁴

CHILDREN LEARNING FROM THEIR MOTHERS

We know from biographies of many of the great scholars in Islam that an important factor in the success they had in combining piety, righteousness and knowledge was the foundation in education they had been given by their mothers. The practice

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭabarāh*, bāb *man lam yatwadḍa’ illā min al-ghashy al-muthqil*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *mā ‘urīda ‘alā l-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam fi ṣalāt al-kusūf*. ² Abd al-Qāḍir AL-QURASHĪ, *al-Jawābir al-mudīyyah fi ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīyyah*, iv. 4. ³ AL-SHAWKĀNĪ, *al-Badr al-ṭālī*, ii. 24. ⁴ See AL-ḤIBASHĪ, *Mu‘jam al-nisā’ al-Yamaniyyāt*, 149.

of introducing children to the ways of the religion at a young age was, as we saw in an earlier chapter, encouraged by the Prophet himself. Accordingly, mothers were motivated to bring children to the assemblies of learning, and to the mosques. Some of the children who came must have been very young indeed. 'Ā'ishah has narrated that the children were brought to the Messenger of God, then he would bless them and do *tabnīk* (the ceremony of softening up a date, then putting a piece of it in the newborn's mouth). On one occasion when a baby soiled his clothes with urine, the Prophet simply called for water, which was poured over the affected part.¹ The women's being in the mosques with children was certainly not forbidden. On the contrary, as we saw earlier, the Prophet was aware of it and if, during the prayer, he heard a baby cry, he would shorten the recitation in order to relieve the mother of distress and distraction.²

The following incident, reported by Abū Burdah ibn Abī Mūsā al-Ash'arī, sheds light on how mothers would impress the *sunnahs* on their children's minds. In this instance, the mother gets Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī to explain to their son something that he had had the opportunity to explain but failed to do so:

I was with my father Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī in the house of Umm al-Faḍl. She sneezed [and said *al-ḥamdu li-l-lāh*], then my father said to her: May God be merciful to you. Then I sneezed and he did not say it to me. When I came to my mother I told her [what happened]. When Abū Mūsā came home she said to him: My son sneezed in your presence and you did not pray for him and a woman sneezed and you prayed for her. He said: Your son sneezed and he did not praise God so I did not pray for him; whereas she sneezed and she praised God, so I prayed for her. I have heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – say: When someone sneezes in your presence, and he praises God, then pray for him, and if he does not praise Him, then do not pray for him. She said: You are right. You are right.³

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭabārāh*, bāb *ḥukm bawl al-ṭifl al-radī' wa kayfiyyati ghasli-hi*.

²*Ibid.*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *amr al-a'immati bi takhfi al-ṣalāh fi tamām*. ³AL-HĀKIM, *Mustadrak*, iv. 265.

Sometimes, the children were taught by explicit precept. For example, Sufyān ibn ʿUyaynah narrates from Ibn al-Munkadir that he said: 'My mother said to me: O my son, do not joke to excess with the children, otherwise they will treat you lightly.'¹ At other times, the teaching was by allusion: ʿĀsim ibn ʿAlī has narrated: 'ʿAbdullāh ibn Bakr ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Muzanī narrated to us saying: My mother told me that [my] father has vowed that whenever he heard two people disputing about destiny he would stand and pray two *rakʿabs*.'² However, the best thing mothers could teach their children was the responsibility to be active in seeking the knowledge for themselves by attending on those who had it, for that is the basis of the established tradition among the people of ḥadīth, to travel in search of the higher *isnād*, of greater nearness to the original. ʿAffān narrates from Shuʿbah that he said: 'My mother said to me: There is a woman here narrating ḥadīths from ʿĀʾishah. Go and learn ḥadīths from her. Then I went to her and received ḥadīths from her. The name of that woman was Shumaysah Umm Salamah.'³

CHILDREN NARRATING FROM THEIR MOTHERS

In this next ḥadīth four women Companions are narrating from each other, two of them wives of the Prophet and two of them their daughters. ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr narrated from Zaynab bint Abī Salamah, from Ḥabībah bint Umm Ḥabībah, from her mother from Zaynab bint Jahsh that she said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – woke up, his face red, and said: 'There is no god but God! Destruction is [coming] for the Arabs from an evil that is near. Today, there has opened in the wall of Gog and Magog [a breach] like this – and he indicated a circle [with his fingers]. She says: I said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – will we be destroyed when righteous

¹ AL-WASHSHĀʾ, *al-Zarf wa-l-ẓurafāʾ*, 54. ² ABŪ NUʿAYM AL-AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Ḥilyat awliyāʾ*, ii. 256. ³ BAḤSHAL, *Taʾrīkh Wāsiṭ*, 109.

people are among us? He said: Yes, when the evil becomes preponderant.'¹

Yahyā ibn Bashīr ibn Khallād narrated from his mother that she called upon Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī and heard him say: 'Abū Hurayrah narrated to me: The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Make the imām [stand] in the middle [of the rows in prayer] and fill the gaps [in the rows].'²

'Abd Rabbih ibn al-Ḥakam al-Thaqafi al-Ṭā'ifi narrated from his mother Bint Ruqayqah who narrated ḥadīth from her mother.³

'Amir al-Sha'bi narrated from Yahyā ibn Ṭalḥah, from his mother Su'dā al-Murriyyah that she said: 'Umar passed by Ṭalḥah after the death of the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and said to him: Why are you so down-hearted? Do you dislike the rule of your cousin [i.e. Abū Bakr]? He said: No. Rather, [it is because] I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – say: I know a word, no one utters it at the time of his death, but that word will be a light for his book of deeds; his body and soul will get comfort at the time of death. I did not ask him before he passed away. [Umar] said: I know that word; it is the word that he wanted his uncle [Abū Ṭālib] to utter. Had he known anything better than that for his salvation he would have required him [to utter it].'⁴

Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah narrated from Ibn al-Munkadir, from Ibn Rumaythah, from his mother that she said: 'I called upon 'Ā'ishah. She prayed eight *rak'ahs* at the time of forenoon. My mother asked her: Tell me from the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – anything [that he said] about this prayer.

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Abādith al-anbiyā'*, bāb *qiṣṣat ya'jūj wa ma'jūj*, *Fitan*, bāb *waylun li-l-'arab min sharrin qad iqtarab*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan wa ashrāt al-ṣā'ah*, bāb *iqtirāb al-fitan*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Fitan wa-l-malāḥim*, bāb *dhikr al-fitan wa dalā'il-i-hā*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *fitan*, bāb *mā jā'a fī kburūj ya'jūj wa ma'jūj*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, bāb *mā yakūnu min al-fitan*; IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, *Tarājim al-nisā'*, 71–72. ² ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *maqām al-imām min al-ṣaff*. ³ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 131–32. ⁴ IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Adab*, bāb *faḍl lā ilāha illa l-lāh*.

She said: I will not tell you anything about it from the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam*. But if my father could be brought back to life on the condition that I quite [doing these *rak‘abs*], I would not quit [them].¹

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Awn narrated from al-Ḥasan from his mother, from Umm Salamah that she said: ‘I will not forget the incident [during the preparations for the battle] of the Trench when the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was giving [the people] milk, and his chest-hair was dusty and he was saying: The good is the good of the hereafter, so [may God] forgive the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn.²

‘Abd al-Hamīd ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid narrated saying: Umm Janūb bint Numaylah narrated to me from her mother Suwaydah bint Jābir, from her mother ‘Uqaylah bint Asmar ibn Muḍarris from her father Asmar ibn Muḍarris that he said: ‘I came to the Prophet and I pledged allegiance to him, then he said: Whoever comes to any water, where no Muslim has come before him, then it is his.’³

Kathīr ibn Farqad narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn Mālīk ibn Ḥudhayfah, from his mother al-‘Āliyah bint Subay‘ that she said: ‘I had sheep on Mt Uḥud, some of which died. Then I called on Maymūnah, the wife of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – and I mentioned that to her. Maymūnah said to me: If you had taken their hides, you could have made use of them. [al-‘Āliyah] said: Is it allowed (*ḥalāl*)? She said: Some people from Quraysh passed by the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – pulling a [dead] goat of theirs [behind them] as [one pulls] a donkey. The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said to them: If you had taken its hide! They said: It is dead. The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Tanning will purify [its hide].⁴

¹ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 180. ² ABŪ NU‘AYM, *Ḥilyat awliyā’*, iii. 49. ³ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, Kharāj, bāb *fī iqtā‘ al-araḍīn*. ⁴ *Ibid.*, *Libās*, bāb *fī ubḥ al-maytah*.

Among the Successors of the Companions, 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān was renowned as a jurist and as a narrator. Among those who narrated from her was her son Abū l-Rijāl Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī, a number of whose narrations of ḥadīth are recorded by al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Nasa'ī and Ibn Mājah.¹

THE MANNERS OF THE WOMEN SCHOLARS

The sources that record the work of the *muḥaddithāt* of later centuries do not provide much detail as to their manners, how they did their work. They are described not specifically but generally as pious, virtuous, deeply learned, intelligent, generous with their time and their wealth, and despite teaching for most of the day, of astonishing patience and forbearance. Also, about some of them, their rank in the field of ḥadīth is mentioned – either in the form of a title such as *musnidah*, or by quoting the judgements about them of famous students. By contrast, the scholars from the generation of the Companions and their Successors were far more present in the social space – they had to be for their knowledge to be passed on to many when they themselves were (relatively to the students) few in number. More specific accounts of their qualities are mentioned in the sources than is the case for the women teachers after them, who modelled their manners and character on theirs.

The study of ḥadīth texts and their chains of authority has many technical elements, suited to those with an academic bent. That said, the *Sunnah* which that scholarship is meant to serve is not an academic pursuit but a way of living. The scholars of ḥadīth, men and women, were aware that, as well as responsibility for accurately preserving and transmitting the knowledge that was with them, they carried a responsibility to transmit to their students the best manners in thought, speech and action. They had to be mindful that they were passing on what had reached them of the teaching of God's Messenger, not what

¹ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 242.

might suit or serve a political or sectarian bias, nor what might improve their standing in this world. The best of the scholars were content with moral authority and kept clear of the temptations and burdens of political power. Insofar as women were further from those temptations, they were able to preserve a virtually flawless record for integrity and truthfulness in their reporting and in their personal conduct.

An excellent model of the virtues of the *muḥaddithāt* is the *tābiʿiyyah* Umm al-Dardā'. Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAblah narrates that a man came to her and told her that a certain individual had criticized her before the caliph, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān. She said: 'If we are rebuked for something that is not found in us, then very often we are also praised for something that is not in us.'¹ It is wonderful how gently she criticizes the one who sought to bring her into the caliph's disfavour, without needing to say she has no awe or dread of the caliph's rank and power. In fact, ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān used to attend her class in Damascus to learn the *fiqh* from her, and he sat as one among her other students.² Also, Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUbaydillāh has reported: 'ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān was sitting in the Rock [of Jerusalem] and Umm al-Dardā' was sitting with him [teaching]. When the *adhān* of *maghrib* was called, he stood up and she stood up leaning on ʿAbd al-Malik [and so they remained] until he entered the mosque with her. Then she sat with the women and ʿAbd al-Malik went forward to lead the prayer.'³

Umm al-Dardā' commanded such respect because she had achieved the humility that comes through *taqwā*, wariness of God. ʿAwn ibn ʿAbdillāh narrates: 'We used to come to [the assembly of] Umm al-Dardā' and remember God there.'⁴ She was, in addition to teaching, famously relentless in devotions. Yūnus ibn Maysarah reports: 'The women used to worship with Umm al-Dardā' and when they became weak from standing they

¹ IBN ʿASĀKIR, *Taʾrikh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisāʾ*, 432. ² IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah, sub anno 82*. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, iv. 279. ⁴ *Ibid.*, iv. 278.

would lean on ropes.'¹ Intensity of worship is also reported of other women teachers: Hāfiẓ al-Silafī narrates from Abū l-Rijāl Fityān ibn Naṣrullāh al-Azdī that he said: 'The mother of my children [i.e. my wife] narrated to me that she saw Khadijah bint al-Faqīh Abī l-'Abbās al-Rāzī many times praying the whole night and not sleeping except when overcome by sleep.'²

The teachers' work was a sacrifice on the path of God, and they attended to their students' needs with the same care as a mother does her children. 'Uthmān ibn Ḥayyān (d. 105) says: 'We ate food with Umm al-Dardā' and we omitted to praise God. She said: O my children, do not omit to season your food with remembrance of God. Eating and praising God is better than eating and being silent.'³ 'Abd Rabbih ibn Sulaymān ibn 'Umayr ibn Zaytūn reports that 'Umm al-Dardā' would write the wisdom that she taught me on my slate'⁴ – we guess that he was then too young to have learnt to write himself. He also reports that she would say to him: 'Learn the wisdom when you are little [young], then you will implement it when you grow up.'⁵ Sulaym ibn 'Āmir says: 'I set out intending [a journey to] Jerusalem. I passed by [the home of] Umm al-Dardā'. She gave me [something] to drink and she gave me a dinar.'⁶ This spirit of generosity, giving of their wealth as well as time, is a consistent and stable characteristic of the *muhaddithāt*. Mūsā ibn 'Abdillāh says: 'Ā'ishah bint Talḥah narrated to us and said [that] the people used to come to [umm al-mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah] from every city. They would write letters from their cities. I would sit before 'Ā'ishah [and say]: *Khālah* [aunt], this is a letter from so-and-so and a gift from him. Then 'Ā'ishah would say to me: My child, answer him and reward him. If you do not have anything to reward [him with], I will give you [something]. Then she would give me [something for him].'⁷

¹ *Ibid.* ² ABŪ ṬĀHIR, *Muḥjam al-safar*, 83. ³ IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā'*, 433. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 428. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 433. ⁶ ABŪ ZUR'AH AL-DIMASHQĪ, *al-Ta'rīkh* i. 333. ⁷ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, bāb *al-kitābah ilā l-nisā'* wa jawābi-hinn.

Some of the women were so engrossed in teaching that they devoted their whole day to it, holding extended sessions almost without rest. One *muhaddithah* renowned for stamina through all-day sessions of teaching was Sitt al-Wuzarā' bint 'Umar ibn al-Munajjā (d. 716).¹ She was popular in Damascus for teaching al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, then invited to Cairo where she taught it in the great mosque and other venues, her lessons being attended by notable men of the city, including its scholars. She lived beyond the age of ninety² and was still teaching on the last day of that long life.³ Al-Dhahabī (a student) says of her: 'She was steadfast, patient for long sessions of teaching.'⁴ The reason for such prolonged sessions was that students had often travelled great distances and wished to hear and read many ḥadīths in large compilations and in the shortest period. That needed exceptional endurance on the part of the teachers as, often, the students attended in large numbers. Al-Dhahabī says about another of his women teachers, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d. 740): 'She was devout, pious and generous, she narrated a lot of books. The students crowded round her, and read to her large books. She was of fine character, patient. Very often they would read to her most of the day, she was noble and kind.'⁵ Ibn Rāfi' (d. 774) says about her: 'She taught big books, and she was easy in teaching, loved the people of ḥadīth, [and she was] kind and noble.'⁶

'Awn ibn 'Abdillāh reports about Umm al-Dardā' that he once asked her: 'Have we wearied you? She said: You [pl.] weary me? I have sought worship in everything. I did not find anything more relieving to me than sitting with scholars and exchanging [knowledge] with them.'⁷ Revising with students was necessary to establish the knowledge securely in their minds and hearts.

¹ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kamīnah*, ii. 129. ² IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, sub anno 79. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 292. ⁴ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juz' al-maṣqūd min Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, 421. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kamīnah*, ii. 117. ⁶ IBN RĀFI', *al-Wafayāt*, i. 318. ⁷ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 355.

Al-Dhahabī says about his teacher, Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 704), that she was particularly good in revising.¹

Sometimes, as a break from the serious work of studying ḥadīth, the *muḥaddithāt* would narrate interesting stories to relax their students. Sitt al-Fuqahā' al-Ḥamawīyyah (d. 720) used to do this.² There is precedent for it in the accounts we have of the Companions, who might sometimes joke with their students. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Aswad narrates: 'My father used to send me to 'Ā'ishah and [as a child] I used to go to her [i.e. beyond the curtain]. When I became adult, I came to her and called to her from behind the curtain: O *umm al-mu'minīn*, when does the bath becomes compulsory? She said: So, you have done it, O Luka! And [in answer to the question] when the private parts conjoin.³

If the students erred, they would sometimes correct them with gentle admonition, sometimes with severity, according to the need. Yazīd ibn al-Aṣamm narrates: 'I and a nephew of hers welcomed 'Ā'ishah when she came [back] from Makkah. We had jumped into a garden of Madinah and picked its fruits. She was told about that. She turned to her nephew, rebuking him; then, she scolded me and said: Do you not know that God has brought you up in the house of his Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*? By God, Maymūnah has left [i.e. died] and now your rope has been thrown on your shoulder [so you are without a guardian and must guide yourself]. Listen! Among us she was among those most wary of God and most caring for her blood relatives.⁴ An example of appropriate severity is this response by Umm al-Dardā' to a serious failure of manners in one of her students. It is reported by Ibn Abī Zakariyyā al-Khuzā'i: 'We went out on a journey with Umm al-Dardā'. Then a man joined our company. Umm al-Dardā' asked him: What is preventing you from reciting [the Qur'ān] and remembering God as your companions [are doing]? He said: I have [memorized] only one

¹Al-Dhahabī, *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 258. ²*Ibid.*, i. 290. ³AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, v. 11. ⁴*Ibid.*, ii. 243–44.

sūrah of the Qurʾān, and I have repeated it so often that I have let it go. She said: Is the Qurʾān let go? I will not keep company with you – either you go ahead of us or come after us. The man mounted his camel and left.’¹ Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUbaydillāh narrates: ‘Umm al-Dardā’ said to me: O Ismāʿīl, how can one sleep if he has 10,000 under his pillow? Ismāʿīl said to her: Rather, how can one sleep if he does not have 10,000 under his pillow! She said: *Subḥān al-lāh*! I see you will be tried (*tubtālā*) by [fortune in] this world.’ And Ismāʿīl was indeed tested by getting fortune in this world.² Zayd ibn Aslam narrates that ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān, the caliph, once invited Umm al-Dardā’ and she was a guest in his house. One night, he got up in the night and called his servant, who came a little late. ‘Abd al-Malik cursed him. ‘In the morning Umm al-Dardā’ said to him: I heard you last night cursing your servant. I have heard Abū l-Dardā’ say that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: The cursers will not be intercessors or witnesses on the Day of Resurrection.’³

Teaching unpaid; accepting small gifts

Most of the women taught without asking for or taking payment. However, they would accept from their students what they, unasked, could give as a gift. ʿUthmān ibn Ḥayyān reports from Umm al-Dardā’ that she said: ‘One of them will say “O God, provide for me”. But he knows that God does not rain gold or silver over him. Rather, He provides people through each other. So whoever is given something he should accept [that]. If one is rich he should give to the needy, and if one is poor he should use that for his need.’⁴ Ibrāhīm ibn Abī ‘Ablah says: ‘I saw Umm al-Dardā’ in Jerusalem sitting among poor women. A man came and distributed some money among them. He gave Umm al-Dardā’ a *fals* [a copper]. She said to her servant: Buy camel meat

¹ IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājīm al-nisāʾ*, 431. ² *Ibid.*, xxxix. 452. ³ *Ibid.*, *Tarājīm al-nisāʾ* 435. ⁴ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, iv. 279.

with it. She said: Is not that money *ṣadaqah*? Umm al-Dardā' said: It came to us unasked.'¹ The sources record many instances of *muḥaddithāt* who were needy, and when their students came to know of that, they would help them to the extent possible for them. Al-Sakhāwī says in his account of his teacher 'Ā'ishah bint al-Zayn (d. 880): 'She became very poor, so much so that she stayed in the *ribāṭ* of Umm al-Zaynī ibn Muzhir for a time, and she accepted a little from her students. About his teacher Sārah bint 'Umar al-Ḥamawīyyah (d. 855), he says; 'She narrated a lot of ḥadīth; the imāms [of ḥadīth] heard from her; and [in terms of volume] I studied with her what is beyond description. She was righteous, with little wealth; that is why we used to help her. She was marked by intelligence, good taste, love of the students, patience in [her] teaching.'²

THE NUMBERS OF THEIR STUDENTS

Among the women scholars there were those who had a small number of students, and those who had a huge number. The huge number of narrators from *umm al-mu'minīn* 'Ā'ishah have already been mentioned. To illustrate the scale, from the later period, I have listed (see Table 2, below) the names of those of the students of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādīyyah (d. 574)³ who were, or who later became, famous as scholars, jurists, qāḍīs, and ascetics.⁴ After that, to show how heavily attended some of the *muḥaddithāt*'s classes could be, I present a copy of, and then a transcription of the names of the students given on the attendance record (*samā'*) of a class, of which the most famous teacher out of 14 teachers was Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d. 740). The class took place on 1st Rajab 718 in the Jāmi' al-Muẓaffarī, Qāsyūn, Damascus. She was teaching Juẓ' *Intikhab al-Ṭabarānī li ibni-hi Abī Dharr 'alā ibn Fāris*, which

¹IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'rikh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā'*, 430. ²AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 52. ³AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta'rikh al-Islām (sub anno 571-580)*, 146. ⁴Accounts of Shuhdah's students can be looked up *in loco* in AL-MUNDHIRĪ, *al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-naqalah*.

she heard from Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im, who heard it from Yaḥyā al-Thaqafī, who narrated it from Abū ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥaddād, who narrated it from Abū Nu‘aym al-Aṣbahānī, who narrated it from its author, al-Ṭabarānī. Only a few women attended this class; their names are shown in *italic*.

Table 2. Famous students of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr
Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādīyyah (d. 574)

Name of student (d., place) [other places associated with]	place(s) mainly associated with
Abū Ismā‘īl Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī al-Dimashqī (d. 614, Damascus)	Damascus
Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn al-Muẓaffar al-Baghdādī (d. 622, Mosul)	Mosul, Sinjar
Abū l-Ma‘ālī Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Nahrawānī (d. 629, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Māristānī al-Ṣūfī (d. 639, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū Muḥammad Ismā‘īl ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Azajī al-Māmūnī	
Abū Muḥammad Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Alī al-Jawharī (d. 631, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Shaykh Abū l-Faḍl Ilyās ibn Jāmī‘ al-Irbilī al-Shurūṭī (d. 601, Irbil)	Irbil
Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Umar al-Mawṣilī (d. 622, Mosul)	Mosul, Irbil
Abū Ṭāhir al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣarṣarī (d. 633, Sarsar)	Baghdad, Sarsar
Abū Aḥmad Dāwūd ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥammāmī	
Abū l-Ma‘ālī Sa‘īd ibn ‘Alī al-Baghdādī al-Wā‘iz	
Abū Muḥammad Ṭalḥah al-‘Althī al-Ḥanbalī (d. 593, al-‘Alth)	al-‘Alth
Abū Bakr ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥḥān (d. 623, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū Ja‘far ‘Abdullāh ibn Naṣrullāh al-Hāshimī (d. 622, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Faṭḥ ‘Abdullāh ibn Abī Ghālīb al-Sāmarrī (d. 636, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Qāsim al-Dīyā‘ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Qurashī (d. 616, Cairo)	Cairo
Abū Bakr ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Maḥfūz al-Ḥanbalī (d. 630, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Najm al-Anṣārī (d. 634, Damascus)	Damascus
Abū l-Qāsim ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilī (d. 606, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Dulaf al-Baghdādī (d. 637,	Baghdad

Baghdad)	
Abū Ṭālib 'Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Qubbayṭī (d. 641, Baghdad)	Baghdad
al-Muwaḥḥaq Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Laṭīf ibn Yūsuf al-Mawṣilī (d. 629, Baghdad)	Baghdad, Damascus,
Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Sukaynah (d. 602, Qanā, Egypt) [Aleppo, Jerusalem, Egypt]	Baghdad, Makkah Madinah
Abū Bakr 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Alī al-Baghdādī	
Abū l-Ma'ālī 'Ubaydullāh ibn 'Alī al-Naghūbī (d. 622, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Qāsim 'Ubaydullāh ibn al-Mubārak al-Azajī (d. 619, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Futūḥ 'Uthmān ibn Abī Naṣr al-Baghdādī al-Mas'ūdī (d. 636, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī ibn Afdal al-Hāshimī (d. 625, Makkah)	Basrah
Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Ṭilmisānī al-Mālikī (d. 599, Said, Egypt)	Egypt
Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn al-Hāfiẓ Abī l-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Jawzī (d. 630, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Sulamī (d. 602, Hims) [Damascus]	Baghdad, Egypt
Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Nābit al-Azajī (d. 618, Rās al-'Ayn)	Rās al-'Ayn
Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Ibrāhīm al-Turkistānī al-Sūfī (d. 602, Shiraz) [al-Jazirah, Diyar Bakr, Khurasan]	Wasit, Hijaz
Abū Ḥafṣ 'Umar ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Bundār al-Dimashqī (d. 600, Cairo)	Egypt, Damascus
Qayṣar ibn Kumushtkīn (d. 607, Tustar)	Baghdad
Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farghānī (d. 623, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū l-Manāqib Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭāliqānī (d. 623, Damascus) [?Egypt]	Qazwin, Baghdad
Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Baghdādī	Baghdad
Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭāliqānī (d. 614, Rome) [Irbil]	Qazwin, Baghdad
Abū l-Ma'ālī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Jilī al-Baghdādī (d. 627, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Mashshiq al-Baghdādī al-Bayyī' (d. 593)	Baghdad
Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Irbilī (d. 618, Irbil)	Irbil, ?Egypt
Abū l-Ḥasan Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Yūsufī (d. 640, Baghdad)	Baghdad
Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Zabīdī (d. 608, Kaysh island)	Baghdad
Abū l-Barakāt Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Anṣārī (d. 600, Asyut)	Asyut, Mosul

The document shown on the previous page¹ begins by stating the title of the book taught; then follow the names of the 14 shaykhs and shaykhahs taking the class, including Zaynab bint al-Kamāl; their *isnād* to the author; the names of the students who attended the whole session; those who attended only a part of it; the place and date of the class.

Partial transcription of the *samāʿ* of the class of Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d. 740), teaching *Juzʿ Intikhāb al-Ṭabarānī li ibni-hi Abī Dharr ʿalā ibn Fāris* in Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī, Qāsyūn, Damascus, 1 Rajab 718. (The names of the few women students in this class are in italic.)

name of student (date of death if known; place associated with)

Muḥammad ibn Saʿd al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad Yahyā ibn Muḥammad
ibn Saʿd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Maḥdisī

Shaykh Muwaffaq al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī
ibn Ḥassān al-Farrāʾ

Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Salmān al-Bālīsī
Jamāl al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn Yaʿqūb ibn Sayyidihi al-Iskandarī (d.
754; Alexandria)

Aḥmad ibn al-Shaykh Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn
Tammām ibn Ḥassān al-Ḥanbalī (d. 760; Damascus)

Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn
Muḥammad ibn Baqā al-Baghdādī (d. 759; Damascus)

Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUmar ibn
ʿIwāḍ al-Maḥdisī

Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad ibn al-ʿIzz ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar

Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad al-Mulaqqin
ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ayyāsh

Ismāʿīl ibn Sulṭān ibn Ghanāʾim al-Khabbāz the grandson of
Naṣrullāh ibn ʿAyyāsh

Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar ibn ʿAtīq al-Najm ibn ʿAbbās al-ʿAṭṭār

ʿAlī ibn al-Zayn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh
ibn Mūsā

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Abī-l-Ḥarām al-Sanbūsālī

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-
Aṭḥāqī al-Tājir

¹ MUTʿĪ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī*, 445–46. MS M105–Q239.

- 'Alī ibn Nāṣir ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Khabbāz al-Nassāj
 'Abdullāh Aybak 'Atīq ibn Sab' al-Majānīn
 'Umar ibn Ḥamzah ibn Yūnus ibn Ḥamzah al-Irbilī al-'Adawī (d. 782; Safad)
 'Umar ibn Sa'd ibn 'Awsajah al-Ma'dhiri
 Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin
 Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Nāṣih 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Ayyāsh
 Aḥmad ibn 'Abdillāh
 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh 'Izz al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Shaykh Abī 'Umar
 'Uthmān ibn 'Aṭīyah ibn 'Abd al-Wāḥid
 al-Sharīf Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muẓaffar al-Ḥusaynī (d. 776; Damascus)
 'Umar ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Umar ibn Musallam al-Kattānī (d. 777; Damascus)
 Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Naṣrullāh ibn Ḥasan
 'Umar ibn al-'Imād ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uqbah
 Muḥammad ibn al-'Imād ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Uqbah
 Muḥammad ibn Fuḍayl ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin
 Yaḥyā ibn Fuḍayl ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin
 Ibrāhīm ibn Shibl ibn Ḥamdān al-Ḥammāl al-'Aytī al-Sammān
 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
 Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Turaykī
 Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad
 Aḥmad ibn 'Īsā ibn 'Abdillāh al-Jamma'ī
 Muḥammad ibn Nāṣir ibn Maṣṣūr
 'Alī ibn al-Ḥājj Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Tannūrī
 'Alī ibn 'Umar ibn Shibl al-Fiḳā'ī
 Aḥmad ibn 'Umar ibn Shibl al-Fiḳā'ī
 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alwān
 Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh, relative of al-Šā'in al-Ḥanafī al-Turkmānī
 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh
 Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-'Izz
 Rāfi' ibn Rikāb ibn Rikāb al-Ṣarghānī
 al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Salmān ibn Muḥammad al-Ma'marī al-Nu'mānī
 Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān
 'Alī ibn al-'Izz
 Zayn al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Uthmān ibn Sālīm ibn Khalaf al-Maqdisī
 Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn

Kāmil al-Maqdisī

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Faqīr al-Ikḥmīmī

‘Abd al-Salām ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Muta‘ayyish

Ḥusayn ibn Aqsh ibn Shardah al-Kurdī

Muḥammad ibn ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Khayyāt

‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm

Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh

Muḥammad ibn al-Muḥibb ‘Abdillāh al-Maqdisī

his sister *Khadījah*her mother *Dunyā bint Yamān ibn Mas‘ūd ibn Jān*

Muḥammad

Ibrāhīm

‘Abd al-Raḥmān

Zaynab, brothers and sister of Muḥibb ‘Abdillāh al-Maqdisī*Zaynab* and Muḥammad descendants of their brothertheir mother *Fāṭimah bint Muḥibb ibn al-Muḥibb*

al-Imām Amīn al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Wānī (d. 735; Damascus)

his son ‘Abdillāh

Bahā’ al-Dīn ‘Abdillāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Khalīl al-Makkī

Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abdillāh ibn Ya‘qūb ibn Sayyidihiḥ al-Iskandarī (d. 754; Damascus)

his children Muḥammad, Aḥmad and ‘*Ā’ishah*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Rushayq al-Miṣrī al-Mālikī

his daughter ‘*Ā’ishah*

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Naṣrullāh ibn Abī-l-‘Izz al-Zaynī

his son Muḥammad

‘Umar and *Khadījah* descendants of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥāfiẓ

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Mizzī

their aunt *Zaynab*

‘Abdillāh Aybak ‘Atīq ibn Sab‘ al-Majānīn

‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥāzim ibn ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī

Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān ibn Abī-l-Ḥasan al-Dayraqānūnī

Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Mannā‘ al-Tikrītī

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Dāwūd ibn al-Khaḍir al-Taḥḥān

Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin ibn Tamir al-Khayyāt al-Dallī

‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣāliḥī

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Qayyim al-Qaṭṭān

‘Umar and Aḥmad sons of Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn

Ṭarkhān with their father

Muḥammad and Aḥmad sons of Shams al-Dīn ibn Ṭarkhān
their slave Aydmār

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Salāmāh al-Khayyāt
Raslān ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muwaffaq Ismā'īl al-Dhahabī (d. 796;
Damascus)

Ibrāhīm ibn Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn
Abī-l-'Abbās al-'Aṭṭār

'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ni'mah ibn Sālim al-Nābulī
Taḳī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-'Alam ibn Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Ḥarrānī
(d. 742; Damascus)

his children *Khadījah* and Muḥammad

their grandmother *Zaynab* bint 'Alī ibn Isrā'īl al-Kinānī
Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Imām Zayn al-Dīn Abī
Bakr ibn Yūsuf ibn Abī Bakr al-Mizzī

'Uthmān ibn al-Zayn 'Umar ibn Muḥammad ibn Bayān
Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Mawṣilī al-
Khabbāz

his daughter *Zāhidah*

'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Salmān al-Jammā'īlī

his son 'Abd al-Qādir

al-Ḥājj 'Uthmān ibn Khalaf ibn 'Isā al-Ḥarā'ijī

his son 'Abd al-Raḥmān

al-Ṣarīm Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Umar ibn Muslim al-Kinānī

his brother Ḥasan

their cousins Aḥmad and Muḥammad, sons of 'Uthmān

Salāmāh ibn 'Āmir ibn Najwān al-Fuzārī

Fayyād ibn Fayyād ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Funduqī

'Alī ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Ṣumādī

Aḥmad ibn al-Zayn ibn al-Shihāb al-Ḥalbūnī

Muḥammad ibn 'Umar ibn Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb al-Ma'arri

'Abd al-Raḥmān and Aḥmad sons of Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī ibn
Muḥammad ibn Baqā al-Mulaqqin

Muḥammad ibn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-
Dā'im

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ghāzī ibn 'Alī ibn Bashīr al-Turkmānī

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Mānī' al-Bayṭār

Abū l-Thanā' ibn Mūsā ibn 'Abd al-Jalīl al-Furāwī

his son Muḥammad

'Abd al-Ghaffār ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Ghaffār

'Abd al-Ḥamīd

Abū Bakr and ʿĀʾishah children of Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn Barakāt ibn
 Abī-l-Faḍl al-Baʿlabakkī
 ʿAbdullāh ʿAtīq al-ʿIrāqī
 Muḥammad and Fāṭimah children of Muḥammad ibn Shaddād ibn
 ʿUthmān al-Qaṭṭān
 Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Sulaymān al-Warrāq
 Fāṭimah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥajāwī
 Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn al-Thiqah al-Warrāq
 Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muʿallim
 al-Shāghūrī al-Balkhī al-ʿAṭṭār
 his son Muḥammad
 Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Shihāb Aḥmad ibn Muḥsin
 al-Māwardī
 his son Muḥammad
 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Murshidī
 Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn al-Shaykh Zayn al-Dīn
 ʿAbdullāh ibn Marwān al-Fāriqī
 ʿAlī ibn ʿUmar ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar ibn Muʾmin
 ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar ibn Naṣr al-Ḥarrānī al-Nassāj
 ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdān al-Daqqāq
 Yūsuf and Khalīl sons of Ṣāliḥ ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥāfiẓī
 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿUthmān ibn al-Ṣafī ibn ʿUqbah
 ʿAlī ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Mawṣilī al-Dhahabī
 Muḥammad ibn al-Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭanbā ibn
 ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ḥalabīyyah and his brothers
 and Muḥammad ibn Ṭughrīl ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn al-Ṣayrafi

HOW THE MUḤADDITHĀT TRANSMITTED ḤADĪTH

We saw in an earlier chapter that the women as students got ḥadīth and knowledge of the *Sunnah* through the same ways as men. This is also true of how, as teachers, they passed it on.

Narration of the words

The highest way of ḥadīth transmission is by the teacher's speaking the words to the student. It is important to emphasize this lest people should suppose that the women teaching ḥadīth were less particular, less scholarly, about wording or that, since they were women, they conveyed the words at some remove, so

that their students did not directly hear them speak. As always, the precedent is established during the generation of the Companions. I will begin therefore with examples where it is explicit that the students *heard* the ḥadīths spoken to them, because variants are recorded, or because the words as spoken are interpreted to clarify the meaning, or because someone's saying particular words is questioned in order to clarify and confirm it.

Nāfi^c narrated from Ṣafiyyah bint Abī 'Ubayd that

She heard Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar, the wife of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – say that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: 'It is not allowed for any woman who believes in God and the Last Day' or he said 'in God and His Messenger' – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – to be in mourning for a deceased for more than three days except for a husband.¹

Nāfi^c narrated from 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar that he said:

Ḥafṣah narrated to me, and this is about a time when no one would enter upon him [*ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*], that he used to pray two *rak'ahs* when the dawn broke. She meant [when] the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and the caller would call for the prayer.²

'Abdullāh ibn Abī Sa'īd al-Muzanī says:

Ḥafṣah bint 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb narrated to me saying: The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – once had a garment [placed] over his thighs. Abū Bakr sought permission [to enter], and he allowed him while in the same state. Then 'Umar came with the same happening, then other Companions came, while he was in the same state.

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *wujūb al-iḥdād fī 'iddat al-wafāh wa taḥrīmi-hi fī ghayri dhālik illā thalāthata ayyām*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *'iddat al-mutawaffā 'an-hā ṣawju-bā*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *hal tuḥidd al-mar'ah 'alā ghayri ṣawji-bā*. ²AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *al-adḥān ba'd al-fajr*, bāb *al-rak'atayn qabla l-ḡuḥr*, bāb *al-taṭawwu' ba'da l-maktūbah*; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *istiḥbāb rak'atay al-fajr wa-l-ḥaṭṭh 'alay-himā*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *mā jā'a anna-hu yuṣalli-himā fī l-bayt*; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *waqt rak'atay al-fajr wa dhikr al-ikhtilāf 'alā nāfi'*; bāb *rak'atay al-fajr*, bāb *tākhir al-maghrib*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *mā jā'a fī al-rak'atayn qabla l-fajr*.

Then ʿUthmān came, sought permission and he permitted him then he took his garment and put it on [fully]. They talked for a while then they left. I said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿAlī, and your other Companions came and you remained in your state [without changing it]. When ʿUthmān came you dressed [fully]. He said: Should I not be shy from one from whom the [very] angels would be shy?¹

Sālim ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn ʿUmar narrated from Abū l-Jarrāh that Umm Ḥabībah narrated to him saying:

I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: Had it not been a hardship to my community (*ummah*), I would have commanded them to clean their teeth at the time of every prayer when they do *wuḍūʿ*.²

Zuhrī narrated from ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn that Ṣafīyyah, the wife of the Prophet, narrated to him:

I came to the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – and spoke to him when he was in *iʿtikāf* in the mosque. He stood up with me and took me to my house. On the way, two people from the Anṣār met him. She says: When they saw the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – they felt shyness and stepped back. He said: Come forward; this is Ṣafīyyah, my wife. They said: We seek refuge in God, Glorified is He. He said – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam*: I am not saying that you harboured a bad thought, but I know that the satan runs through the body like the blood.³

Qatādah narrates:

¹IBN HANBAL, *Musnad, musnad al-nisāʾ*. ²*Ibid.* ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Iʿtikāf*, bāb *hal yakehruju al-muʿtakif li-hawāʾij-hi ilā bāb al-masjid*; *Adab*, bāb *al-takbīr wa tasbīḥ ʿinda l-taʿajjub*; *Badʿ al-khalq*, bāb *ṣifat iblīs wa junūdi-h*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Istiḍhān*, bāb *bayān anna-hu yustaḥabbu li-man ruʿiya kbāliyan bi imraʾatin wa kānat zawjata-hu aw maḥraman an yaqūla hādhibi fulānatu li-yadfaʿa ḡann al-sūʾ bi-hi*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan, Ṣawm*, bāb *al-muʿtakif yadkulu al-bayta li-hajati-hi*; *Adab*, bāb *min ḥusn al-ḡann*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan, Ṣiyām*, bāb *fī al-muʿtakif yazḡuru-hu ablu-hu fī l-masjid*. ABŪ NUʿAYM AL-AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 168.

‘Abdullāh ibn al-Hārith ibn Nawfal narrated to me from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās that Mu‘āwiyah prayed *‘aṣr* then Ibn al-Zubayr stood up and prayed after it. Mu‘āwiyah said: ‘O Ibn ‘Abbās, what are these two *rak‘abs*? [Ibn ‘Abbās] said: It is an innovation and its doer is an innovator. When Ibn al-Zubayr turned [to them] he said: What did you say? They said: We were speaking about this and that. Ibn al-Zubayr said: I did not do an innovation. Rather, my maternal aunt (*khālah*) ‘Ā’ishah narrated [that] to me. Then Mu‘āwiyah sent someone to ask ‘Ā’ishah. She said: He is right; that is what Umm Salamah narrated to me. Then Mu‘āwiyah sent someone to Umm Salamah [informing her] that ‘Ā’ishah has narrated from you such-and-such. She said: She is right. One day the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – came and he prayed after the *‘aṣr*. I stood up behind him and prayed. When he finished, he said: What is the matter with you? I said: I saw you, O Prophet of God, praying, so I prayed with you. He said, one of my *ṣakāb*-collectors came so I had been preoccupied [with him].¹

Sha‘bī says:

Whenever Masrūq narrated from *umm al-mu‘minīn* ‘Ā’ishah, he would [begin by] say[ing]: ‘Narrated to me the truthful woman, the daughter of the truthful man, the one declared innocent by God, the beloved of the beloved of God’.²

As for the Companions among the women other than the Prophet’s wives, Kulayb said:

The step-daughter of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* –, whose name is Zaynab, narrated to me. I asked her: Tell me whether the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was from among [the descendants of] Muḍar? She said: Then who else was he from, other than Muḍar? He was from among the descendants of Naḍr ibn Kinānah.³

About the famous long ḥadīth about the Antichrist, one version of which is narrated by Fāṭimah bint Qays, Āmir al-

¹IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *fī man fātathu al-rak‘atān ba‘da l-ḡubr*.

²IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 64. ³AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *al-Ta’rīkh al-ṣaghīr*, i. 12.

Sha'bi says the following, noting minor variants in the different tellings of it that are known to him:

I met al-Muḥriz ibn Abī Hurayrah and I narrated to him the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah bint Qays. He said: I testify of my father [Abū Hurayrah] that he narrated to me as Fāṭimah bint Qays narrated to you. He said that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said [the Anti-christ] is in the direction of the east.

Then I met Qāsim ibn Muḥammad and I mentioned to him the ḥadīth of Fāṭimah. He said I testify of 'Ā'ishah that she narrated to me as Fāṭimah narrated to you, except that she said: 'both the sanctuaries of Makkah and Madinah are forbidden to him'.¹

Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah narrated that:

'Ubaydullāh ibn Abī Yazīd narrated to us saying that his father told him saying: I became a guest of Umm Ayyūb, whose guest was the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*. Then she narrated to me this ḥadīth that they made special food for the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – in which there were some of these vegetables [onions or garlic]. They brought the food to him. He did not like it and said to his Companions: Eat, for I am not like you. I fear lest I annoy my companion – meaning the angel [of the revelation, Gabriel].²

That precedent that we have just illustrated continued to be followed through all succeeding periods. The scholars heard the ḥadīths directly from their teachers, spoken by them. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, while listing the works that he studied with Khadījah bint Ibrāhīm al-Ba'labakkiyyah, notes: '...and the *Musnad* of Musaddad: if not by hearing, from al-Qāsim ibn Muẓaffar, with his *ijāzah* from 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Dulaf and Zuhrah bin Muḥammad ibn Ḥādir, with 'Abd al-'Azīz's hearing it from Shuhdah.'³ It is

¹ IBN HANBAL, *Musnad*, *musnad al-nisā'*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan*, *bāb qīṣṣat al-jassāsah*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *K. al-malāḥim*, *bāb fī khabar al-jassāsah*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, *bāb (ḥadīth Tamīm al-Dārī)*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, *bāb fitnat al-dajjāl*. ² AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Sunan*, *Aṭ'imah*, *bāb mā jā'a fī al-rukhṣah fī l-thūm maṭbūkhan*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Aṭ'imah*, *bāb akl al-thūm*; AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 331–32. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 475–576.

clear here that 'Abd al-'Azīz heard the *Musnad* of Musaddad directly from Shuhdah, one of its renowned narrators. Ibn Ḥajar has stated that Ibrāhīm ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Khayyir heard *Amālī Abī Bakr Aḥmad al-Najjād* from Shuhdah;¹ and that Naṣr ibn 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn 'Abd al-Qāḍir, 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Duluf, Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Badr ibn Fityān and Ibrāhīm ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Khayyir and others heard *Mashyakhaḥ Shuhdah* from Shuhdah herself.²

Reading to the teacher

Next in rank, after hearing the text spoken by the shaykh or shaykhah themselves, is reading it to them. In later centuries, when there were more books and more copyists, this way gained in popularity. Ibn al-Jawzī says in the account of Karīmah al-Marwazziyah that imāms like al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, Ibn al-Muṭṭalib, al-Sam'ānī, and Abū Ṭālib al-Zaynabī read to her.³ Al-Sam'ānī has stated that al-Khaṭīb read the whole of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* to Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah in five days.⁴ Similarly Abū l-Waqt 'Abd al-Awwal ibn 'Īsā ibn Shu'ayb al-Harawī read the *Juz' Bībā bint 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah* with her.⁵ Al-Dhahabī says in the account of Sitt al-Wuzarā' bint al-Munajjā: 'I read to her *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Musnad al-Shāfi'ī*.⁶ Muḥammad al-Wānī read to her *Thulāthiyyāt al-Bukhārī*, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, then the whole of the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, then the fifth part of *Fawā'id* 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Umar ibn Naṣr al-Dimashqī, a *juz'* containing 12 ḥadīths from *Musnad al-Shāfi'ī*, three sections from the *Amālī* of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.⁷ Similarly, readings to her were attended by Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Hādī,⁸ Abū Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabī,⁹ 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Majd al-Dimashqī,¹⁰ Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Munajjā al-

¹*Ibid.*, ii. 241. ²*Ibid.*, i. 144–45. ³IBN JAWZĪ, *al-Muntaẓam*, viii. 270. ⁴See *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'* xviii. 277. ⁵IBN AL-RUSHAYD AL-SABTĪ, *Miṣṣab al-'ayyab*, v. 301–02. ⁶AL-DHAHABĪ, *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh* i. 292. ⁷KAHHĀLAH, *A'lam al-nisā'* ii. 173. ⁸IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 267. ⁹*Ibid.*, ii. 145. ¹⁰*Ibid.*, ii. 273.

Tanūkhīyah,¹² Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī Salāḥ al-Dīn al-Zaftāwī,² Aḥmad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Nāsiḥ al-Ḥanbalī,³ Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣāmit,⁴ Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar, ibn Muḥammad al-Shāfi‘ī.⁵ A very large number of people read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl.⁶ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī: ‘I read to her many books and *ajzā*’ in Ṣāliḥīyah.’⁷ Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī also read many books with her.⁸

Correspondence

Students also received ḥadīth from the *muḥaddithāt* by writing to them. An early example is scholars writing to Subay‘ah al-Anṣārīyah about her ḥadīth. ‘Āmir al-Sha‘bī narrates that Masrūq and ‘Amr ibn ‘Utbah wrote to Subay‘ah bint al-Ḥārith asking her about her case. She wrote back and explained the circumstances – that she had delivered at 25 days after the death of her husband, and with that ended her *‘iddah*; then, Abū l-Sanābil ibn Ba‘kak had come by and told her that she had rushed, that she should have waited for the later of the two dates, in this case the full four months and ten days of the known period of *‘iddah*. She had become concerned that she had made a mistake: ‘Then I came to the Prophet and I asked him to pray for my forgiveness. He said: Why is that? I told him. He said: If you find a suitable husband then marry him.’⁹

Correspondence with women for the purpose of establishing knowledge of their ḥadīth is well established in Islam. Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Mundhirī wrote to a large number of women scholars, whom he has mentioned in *al-Takmilah li-wafayāt al-nuqalab*. Another example is Sayyidah bint Mūsā al-Mārāniyyah (d. 695). She left Syria for Egypt and al-Dhahabī was unable to receive

¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 389. ² *Ibid.*, ii. 469. ³ *Ibid.*, ii. 594. ⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 646. ⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. 651. ⁶ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juz’ al-mafqūd min Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, 546. ⁷ IBN ḤAJAR, *Inbā’ al-Ghumr*, iv. 314. ⁸ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, ii. 390–91. ⁹ IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, b. *inqidā’ ‘iddati al-mutawaffā ‘anhā zanju-hā, wa ghayrḥā bi waḍ‘i al-ḥaml*.

ḥadīth directly from her. He much regretted missing the opportunity, and then he received her ḥadīth from her through correspondence.¹

Ijāzah

I explained earlier that *ijāzah* was an accepted form of receiving and transmitting ḥadīth and knowledge of the *Sunnah*, and was very popular in the later centuries. The *muḥaddithāt* gave *ijāzah* both verbally and in writing. Below is an *ijāzah* from Sitt al-Katabah bint ‘Alī ibn Yahyā ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭarrāh:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
 ارزاى الساده احمد الكندي صاحب
 ما لا حان له من راجع من الالف الى الميم
 ام احمد اسب و ام احمد فاطمه ولاى العاشق احمد
 ولاى عمر ان موسى و ابى الجراح يوسف و امير امنه
 محمد بن قدامه جميع منسوخه و احاطوا به و لا يدرى
 لهم روايته من القدر على اختلاف احوالهم على الشرط الصحيح
 النقل فعلموا ذلك من احوالهم و لا يدرى
 و كتب يوم الاحد - اتمر رجب سنة ١٠١٠
 احرب ما منالو و كتب
 سب الكندي
 كفى من على الطراح

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Muḥjam al-shuyūkh*, i. 294.

The document requesting *ijāzah*, the *istid‘ā’*, would often be circulated to different teachers, who would record their *ijāzah* on that document. Sometimes the *istid‘ā’* is addressed to a single shaykh or shaykhah. In the document copy showing on the previous page, the request is from one Muḥammad ibn Khalaf ibn Rājīḥ for himself and his children, male and female and for their mother. The shaykhah responding writes: ‘I have given *ijāzah* for what they have asked.’ Then, following the word ‘written’ is her signature: ‘Sitt al-Katabah bint ‘Alī ibn Yahyā ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭarrāḥ’.¹

It was more typical, just as it was more practical, for the *istid‘ā’* to be circulated to many from many. The teachers would then register the names of several people within the document, for whom the *ijāzah* was valid. At times such *ijāzahs* included a very long list of students’ names. For example, the shaykhah Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 720) gave *ijāzah* in an *istid‘ā’*, written down in Damascus in 694, which names the following persons – the grouping of names, here indicated by a separating line not in the original, is of some interest – :

Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. Sālim b. Rikāb b. Sa‘d al-Anṣārī, his children Muḥammad, Zaynab and ‘Ā’ishah, her mother Fāṭimah bint ‘Umar b. Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarizī, their brothers Muḥammad and ‘Alī, their mother Mudallalah bint Abī Bakr b. Ma‘ālī b. al-Muḥabbar al-Shawbakī, her brother Muḥammad, daughters of her sister Hājir and ‘Ā’ishah daughters of Yūsuf b. Ismā‘īl al-Ba‘li al-Sammān, Abū Bakr, Muḥammad, Zāhidah and Nafīṣah, children of Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Abī l-Faṭḥ al-Ṭahāwī, their sister on their father’s side Dunyā

‘Alī and Sitt al-Ridā, children of Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Adamī

the great *muhaddith* ‘Alam al-Dīn Abū l-Qāsim b. Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Birzālī, his father’s slave Bulbul b. ‘Abdullāh

¹MUṬĪ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Madrasah al-‘Umarīyyah*, 103. MS Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyyah, 4565.

Muḥammad and Zāhidah, both children of 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Khabbāz, Muḥammad Aḥmad and Fāṭimah, children of Shāmah

Fakhr al-Dīn 'Umar b. al-Ḥajj Yūsuf b. Ṭalīb al-'Irbīlī, his sisters Dayfah, Khadījah and Sitt al-Nasab: Khadījah's children Muḥammad, 'Alī and Mulūk children of al-Ḥajj al-'Irbīlī; Dayfah's children Muḥammad Sitt al-Jamī' and Āsiyah children of Muḥammad al-'Irbīlī

Muḥammad and Fāṭimah children of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī b. 'Abdillāh al-Sirāj

Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar b. Muḥammad al-Nabulsi

Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Khabbāz

Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad b. Naṣr al-Maqdisī al-Mu'adhdhin, her mother Nafisah bint Ibrāhīm b. Sālīm al-Anṣārī, her brother Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūsuf b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūsuf al-Mizzī

Aḥmad b. Qādī al-quḍāt Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥasan b. Sharaf al-Dīn Abī Bakr 'Abdullāh b. Abī 'Umar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Qudāmah al-Maqdisī

Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Māzdānī al-Khayyāt, his mother Āminah bint Aḥmad b. Naṣrullāh b. 'Umar b. al-Rikāb al-Shāghūrī

'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Munajjā

'Alī and Abū Bakr sons of Salāh al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Shahrazūrī

Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Qurashī

Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-Barr b. Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn b. Razīn al-Hamāwī al-Shāfi'ī

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Ismā'īl b. Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Sharā'ihī

'Umar and Muḥammad sons of Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥasūb, their slave Mas'ūd b. 'Abdullāh, their aunts Zaynab and Khātūn daughters of al-Badr Ḥasan b. Balbān al-Salūqī

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Quwayrah al-Hanafī al-Sulamī

Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abdullāh, guardian Dār al-Hādīth al-Zāhiriyyah

Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Anṣārī al-Zajjāj and his sisters living [at time of writing]

Marwān b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Marwān al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. Yūnus al-Najjār

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Umar

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Yūnus, Muḥammad b. Īddīq b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Jabbār, his sister Dayfah and her sisters living [at time of writing]

Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār
Aḥmad b. Dāwūd b. ʿAlī al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of ʿIzz al-Dīn Aybak b. ʿAbdullāh al-Rushaydī al-Sālīhī
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Tājir
ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Maʿtūq al-Shāfiʿī al-Muʿaddib b. al-Laḥḥām and his living children, Muḥammad, ʿAlī and Aḥmad children of ʿImād al-Dīn Aḥmad and their sisters living [at time of writing]
Muḥammad b. Ghāzī b. Muḥammad
Ḥasan b. Ibrāhīm al-Daqqāq
ʿAlī b. ʿUmar b. ʿUmar
Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. ʿĀmir al-Tadmurī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mawṣilī, his sister on his mother's side
Muḥammad b. Aqūsh b. ʿAbdullāh al-Qabāqībī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Muḥaddith and his existing brothers, their cousin Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm, his brothers and sisters living [at time of writing]
ʿAlī b. al-Shujāʿ ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm and his brother, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿUmar al-Ḥalabī
Muḥammad b. Mujāhid b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaḥrāwī,
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaḥrāwī
Uzbek b. ʿAbdullāh slave of ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Zāhirī
Muḥammad, Aḥmad and ʿAlī, children of Dāwūd b. Khuzaymah al-Khabbāz
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Yaḳāzān b. Ghazwān al-Daqqāq al-Samtī
Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Samtī al-Khabbāz
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad
Aḥmad b. Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Daqqāq
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Nāṣir b. Ṣālīh al-Shawī
Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. Sharaf al-Daqqāq
Mūsā and Muḥammad sons of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad
Muḥammad and ʿAlī sons of Mūsā al-Ḥumaydī
Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Ḥumaydī
Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Daqqāq
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ḥarbī, Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Tājir
Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Nassāj

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf b. Aḥmad al-Sammān
Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisī
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAlī al-Fāmī
Aḥmad b. Maʿtūq b. Aḥmad al-Ḥammāmī
ʿAlī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Khayyāt
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-ʿAṭṭār
Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Nassāj
Ibrāhīm b. Sharaf b. Yaʿqūb al-Dimashqī
Manṣūr b. Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān Fakhūrī
Aḥmad b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad al-Jāmūs
ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī al-Taḥāwī
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Qaṭṭān
Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-Dimashqī
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Mujīb b. Abī l-Futūḥ al-Ḥarīrī
ʿAlī b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdullāh al-Jammāl
ʿUmar b. Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-Nassāj
Aḥmad and Ḥasan sons of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Mawṣilī al-Jundī
ʿUmar b. ʿUthmān b. al-Shihāb Aḥmad al-Khashshāb
Ibrāhīm b. Yahyā b. Ibrāhīm al-Tayyāh
Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad
Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad b. Thumālāh b. Minhāl al-Muʿarbid
al-ʿIzz ʿUmar b. Ḥasan b. ʿAbdullāh b. Ḥabīb al-Tājir
Yūsuf b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Tammām al-Dimashqī al-Muʿadhdhin
Fakhr al-Dīn Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad b. Amīn al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr al-Dimashqī, his sister Fāṭimah
Muḥammad and Naṣrullāh sons of Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAlī b. al-Qalānīsī, their sister Zāhidah
Muḥammad b. Badr al-Dīn Luʿluʾ b. ʿAbdullāh al-Mubārizī, his sister ʿĀʾishah
Imām Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Baʿlī, his children, Muḥammad and Aḥmad sons of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abī l-Faṭḥ
ʿUmar, ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, children of al-Ḥājj Aḥmad b. ʿUmar b. ʿUthmān al-Dimashqī al-Anṣārī
Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Muqrī
Fāṭimah bint al-Jamāl Yūsuf b. Yaʿqūb al-Ghumārī al-Mālikī, her sister on her mother's side Zaynab bint Sirāj b. Muḥammad b. Saʿūd al-

Mash‘arānī

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Muhandis, his sons ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and ‘Abdullāh

‘Abd al-Raḥmān and Khadījah children of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Usāmah b. Kawkab al-Ṭā’ī al-Sawādī, their father

Muḥammad and Amat al-Raḥmān, children of Shaykh ‘Afīf al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abdillāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Irbilī al-Shāfi‘ī,

Muḥammad, Fāṭimah and Zaynab, children of Imām Jamāl al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. ‘Alī b. Shāwar al-Ḥimyarī al-‘Adawī

Ḥasan and ‘Alī, sons of Shaykh Faṭḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wāhid b. ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Anṣārī b. al-Zamlakānī

Muḥammad b. Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad

Khadījah bint al-Ra’īs Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Naṣrullāh b. al-Qalānisi

Sulaymān b. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Kāfi b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-Kāfi al-Shāfi‘ī

Muḥammad b. ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq b. Khalaf

Muḥammad b. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ghālib al-Anṣārī

Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Anṣārī b. al-Ba‘labakkī

Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ṭāj al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Fākhūrī al-Raqqī

Muḥammad b. Sharaf al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Fuzārī

Ismā‘īl b. al-Qāḍī Najm al-Dīn Ishāq b. Ismā‘īl qāḍī al-Raḥbah, Aḥmad, ‘Alī and their existing brothers children of ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. Ibrāhīm b. Salmān b. Ghānim

Muḥammad and ‘Abdullāh’ sons of Abū Bakr b. al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad b. al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil Abī ‘Alī

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, ‘Abdullāh and Ismā‘īl, sons of Shaykh Majd al-Dīn Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Abī Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Jazarī and [...]

ASSEMBLIES FOR NARRATION AND TEACHING

The women organized their assemblies for teaching and narrating ḥadīth in their houses or the houses of others, in mosques,

¹ *Majmū‘ah al-Ijāzāt*, MS in the Madrasah al-Diyā’iyyah, Qāsyūn.

madrasas and other places, like *ribāṭs* (retreats) and orchards or gardens, wherever was easy and convenient for the purpose. I have not found any evidence that the Companions or the jurists and traditionists of later centuries put any hindrance in the way of women's teaching. To the contrary, their assemblies were well attended by jurists and great scholars.

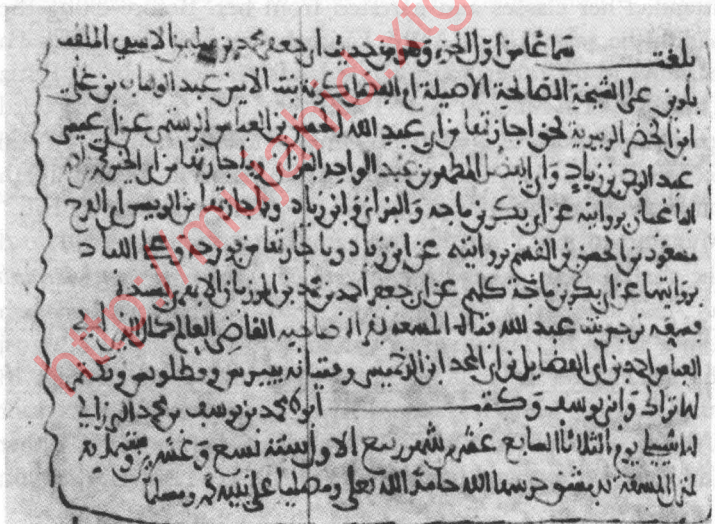
Houses

Umm al-mu'minīn 'Ā'ishah taught in her own house, and in Basrah in the house of 'Abdullāh ibn Khalaf where she was a guest of Ṣafīyyah bint al-Hārith ibn Ṭalḥah ibn Abī Ṭalḥah al-'Abdarī. Similarly, others among the wives of the Prophet, and the Companions taught in private houses. That tradition has continued until our day. Among the *muḥaddithāt* of the sixth century Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn taught at her home. Ibn 'Aṣākir attended her classes and narrated from her. Before citing the ḥadīth, he says: 'Umm Abihā Fāṭimah bint 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn narrated to us in her house while I was reading to her.'¹ Ḥāfiẓ Diyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī says: 'I heard the first, second and third [parts] from *Fawā'id al-Hājj* with Umm al-Fakhr Jumū'ah bint Abī Sa'd Rajā' ibn Abī Naṣr al-Ḥusayn ibn Sālim al-Aṣbahāniyyah on Wednesday the 4th or 5th Ṣafar 599 at her house in Isfahan.'² Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf ibn Muḥammad al-Birzālī says: 'I read the sixth part of *al-Fawā'id al-Muntaqāh al-gharā'ib 'an al-shuyūkh al-'Awālī al-ma'rūf bi-l-Mukhalliyyāt*, with the righteous shaykhah Umm al-Fityān Hantamah bint al-Shaykh Abī l-Faṭḥ al-Mufarrij ibn 'Alī ibn Maslamah in her house in Damascus on Tuesday 18 Jumādā al-Ūlā 630.'³ It is recorded in the account of Zaynab bint al-'Alam Aḥmad ibn Kāmil ibn 'Umar al-Maqdisī (d. 687) that Ibn Rushayd received ḥadīth from her in her house in Qāsyūn

¹ IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā'*, 297. ² DIYĀ' AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Thabat al-Masmū'āt*, 160. ³ Ṣāliḥ ibn Ghālīb AL-'AWJĪ, *Muqaddimah al-Fawā'id al-muntaqāh al-gharā'ib 'an al-shuyūkh al-'awālī* (M.A. thesis, University Umm al-Qura).

in 684.¹ Ibn Rushayd says in his account of Zaynab bint Muwaffaq al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Lughawī: ‘I read to her a *juḡ*’ from the *Ḥadīth Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Dīzāl al-Hamadhānī* in the house of Umm al-Faḍl in Cairo on Monday 29 Rajab 684.²

Hādīth ‘Abd al-Wabbāb al-Kilābī was read to Zaynab bint ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Maqdisīyyah at her house in Damascus on Thursday 23 Sha‘bān 718.³ *Fadā’il al-Madīnah* of Abū Sa‘īd al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Jundī al-Yamānī (d. 308) was read to Umm Aḥmad Khadijah bint Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Dā’im al-Maqdisī (d. 685) in her brother’s house on Wednesday 12 Rabī l-Ākhir 683.⁴ *Hādīth Hibatullāh al-Akfānī* was read to Zaynab bint Ismā‘īl ibn al-Khabbāz in the house of Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd ibn ‘Umar al-Sūfī – one of the students – on Thursday 24 Jumādā al-Ākhirah 744.⁵



¹ IBN AL-QĀDĪ, *Durratu al-Hijāl*, i. 278. ² IBN AL-RUSHAYD AL-SABTĪ, *Mil’ al-‘ayyah*, iii. 319. ³ LEDER et al., *Mu‘jam al-aama‘at al-Dimashqīyyah*, 95, 316. ⁴ Abū Sa‘īd al-Mufaḍḍal, *Fadā’il al-Madīnah*, 55. ⁵ LEDER et al., *Mu‘jam al-samā‘at al-Dimashqīyyah*, 120, 312.

The document copied above is a *samā'* for the book *Ḥadīth Luwayn*. It names the teacher as 'the Shaykhah, the righteous, the authentic (*al-aṣīlah*) Umm al-Faḍl Karīmah bint al-Amin 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn 'Alī ibn al-Khaḍir al-Zubayriyyah. Then follows her *isnād* to the author of the book, the list of names of the men and women who attended, and the date and location of the class: Tuesday 17 Rabī' al-Awwal, 629 'in her house in Damascus'.¹

Mosques

The women also held their classes in the mosques. Umm al-Dardā' is well known for teaching in the mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem. Her classes were attended by male and female jurists and traditionists as we noted earlier, even the caliph, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān was a regular participant. Another example is of the righteous Shaykhah Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Jawhar al-Baḥabakkī al-Bātā'ihi (d. 711). Al-Dhahabī says in his account of her: 'She heard *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* from Ibn al-Zabīdī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* from Abū l-Thana' Maḥmūd ibn al-Ḥaṣīrī, and also studied with Abū l-Qāsim ibn Rawāḥah. She lived a long life and narrated a lot.'² Ḥāfiẓ Ibn al-Qayyim studied ḥadīth with her.³ Al-Dhahabī says: 'My son, al-Subkī, Sirāj al-Dīn ibn al-Kuwayk, al-Taqī ibn Abī l-Ḥasan and a great number [of others] studied ḥadīth with her.'⁴ She taught ḥadīth in the mosque of the Prophet in Madinah. Ibn Rushayd says: 'She came in the Syrian caravan as visitor and pilgrim. I met her in the mosque of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and ḥadīth were read to her while she was leaning on the side of the wall of the grave of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – in front of his head. She wrote *ijāzah* with her own hand for me and for others.'⁵ There too Ibn Rushayd records

¹ LEDER *et al.*, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqīyyah*, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35^a.

² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh*, ii. 103. ³ AL-DĀWŪDĪ, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīrīn*, ii. 91. ⁴ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juz' al-maṣqūd min Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, 394. ⁵ IBN AL-RUSHAYD AL-SABTĪ, *Miṣ' al-ayyab*, v. 21.

that he read some ḥadīths with Fāṭimah. It is not possible that Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad could have taught at a spot so revered by the whole community unless she enjoyed its respect and trust in the highest degree. How great an honour for her!

In Damascus the women used to teach in several mosques, like al-Jāmi^c al-Muẓaffarī (Jāmi^c al-Ḥanābilah) and Jāmi^c Banū Umayyah. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn Dimashqī says in his note on ʿĀʾishah bint ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 816): 'She was appointed to the post of teacher of ḥadīth in the grand mosque of Banū Umayyah.'¹

Schools

The women scholars also taught in the schools, where their classes were attended by both male and female students of ḥadīth. The records are plentiful and unambiguous about this. *Majlis al-Bitāqah* of Abū l-Qāsim Ḥamzah ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Kinānī (d. 357) was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl and Ḥabībah bint al-Zayn in al-Madrasah al-Diyāʾiyyah on Thursday 28 Ṣafar 733.² *Hādīth* of Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Shīrāzī was read to Zaynab bint Makkī al-Harrānī in al-Madrasah al-Mismāriyyah in Damascus in 688 in a class of 19 students.³ *K. al-Fitan* of Ḥanbal ibn Ishāq al-Shaybānī (d. 273) was read to Sitt al-Ahl bin ʿAlwān (d. 703) in the Madrasah al-Ḥanābilah in Damascus on Saturday 16 Rabīʿ l-Awwal 699 in a class of 16 students.⁴ *Fawāʾid Abī Aḥmad al-Ḥakīm* was read to ʿĀʾishah bint Sayf al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Qawālījī on Tuesday, 4 Muḥarram 793, in al-Madrasah al-Khātūniyyah.⁵

¹ *al-Intisār li-samāʿ al-Ḥajjār* included in *Majmuʿ fi-hi Rasāʾil* of al-Ḥāfiẓ IBN NAṢĪR AL-DĪN AL-DIMASHQĪ, 413. ² *al-Samāʿāt* recorded in *Majlis al-Bitāqah min Amālī Ḥamzah al-Kinānī*. MS Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyyah, Damascus. ³ LEDER *et al.*, *Muʿjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 50. 215. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 103, 317. ⁵ *Mā ittaṣal ilay-nā min Fawāʾid Abī Aḥmad al-Ḥakīm*, 100.

Below is a copy of a legible, beautifully written *samā'* for a class on *Hadīth Abī l-Husayn al-Kilābī*.¹ The teacher is 'the shaykhah, the righteous, the woman of high *isnād*, the long-lived' Umm Aḥmad Zaynab bint Makkī ibn 'Alī ibn Kāmil al-Harrānī.

مراتبه اجمع وهو فخره اي عيني الكلابي على الشيخه الصالحه
المستنده المعتمده ام احمد زينب بنت مكي بن علي بن كامل الحراني ابو هاشم
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم اي جعفر بن طبرزد عن ابي بصير عن ابن خنيس
عنه فسمعه اجماعه الساده بها الدين ابو اسحق ابن همام بن اسمعيل
بن ابي هيثم بن ابي اليسر النوحى وابنه احمد و ابو الناجم محمد بن
يونس بن محمود و ابو الرزحون عبد الله الفليطسيان و بها الدين
عبد الصمد بن عبد اللطيف بن محمد الحموي و ابو عبد الله محمد بن محمد بن
فضالة ابن القواس و احمد بن نصر الله بن محمد بن عياش و اخوه
ابن هيثم و محمد بن احمد بن محمد بن الساجوس و اخناه فسيب
و عبيده و ابني عبد الرحمن بن يوسف بن الزكي عبد الرحمن بن يوسف
المزني جافرا في السنه الاولى من عمره و امه زقيه بنت محمد بن علي
الحريري و اخرون ذكرنا و كان شيخه اخري و صح ذلك في يوم
الجمعه العاشر من جمادى الاخره سنه ثمان و مائتين و تسعين
بالمدرسه المستماريه بدستق المحروسة و سمعوا بها
الشيخه بالقرآن و المارح و المكان جيزا فيه خمسة مجالس ١١٧٢
من اما الى الجوهري يخرج ظاهر النسيان بوريه بسم الله من
ابن طبرزد عن اي غالب بن البناء عنه و الاول و الثاني و الخامس
و السادس عن اي غالب بن البناء عن ابن طبرزد عنه و الاول
و السابع من ابي القاسم عن ابن طبرزد عنه و مجلس الجوهري في هذا المجلس

سمعت على اثرها من غير شيخها الصالحه ام احمد زينب بنت مكي بن علي بن كامل الحراني ابو هاشم
عنه فسمعه اجماعه الساده بها الدين ابو اسحق ابن همام بن اسمعيل بن ابي هيثم بن ابي اليسر النوحى
و ابنيه احمد و ابو الناجم محمد بن يونس بن محمود و ابو الرزحون عبد الله الفليطسيان و بها الدين
عبد الصمد بن عبد اللطيف بن محمد الحموي و ابو عبد الله محمد بن محمد بن فضالة ابن القواس
و احمد بن نصر الله بن محمد بن عياش و اخوه ابن هيثم و محمد بن احمد بن محمد بن الساجوس
و اخناه فسيب و عبيده و ابني عبد الرحمن بن يوسف بن الزكي عبد الرحمن بن يوسف المزني
جافرا في السنه الاولى من عمره و امه زقيه بنت محمد بن علي الحريري و اخرون ذكرنا
و كان شيخه اخري و صح ذلك في يوم الجمعه العاشر من جمادى الاخره سنه ثمان و مائتين و تسعين
بالمدرسه المستماريه بدستق المحروسة و سمعوا بها الشيخه بالقرآن و المارح و المكان جيزا فيه
خمس مجالس ١١٧٢ من اما الى الجوهري يخرج ظاهر النسيان بوريه بسم الله من ابن طبرزد
عن اي غالب بن البناء عنه و الاول و الثاني و الخامس و السادس عن اي غالب بن البناء
عن ابن طبرزد عنه و الاول و السابع من ابي القاسم عن ابن طبرزد عنه و مجلس الجوهري في هذا المجلس

¹ LEDER et al., *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqīyah*, 463. MS 3818 fol. 171^a.

She was one of the teachers of al-Mizzī, of Ibn Taymiyyah, al-Dhahabī, al-Birzālī, and other famous scholars of that time. The document continues with her *isnād* to the author of the book, then lists the names of the men and women who attended. It says that the class included five sessions on *Amālī al-Jawharī*. The date given is: Friday, 10 Jumādā al-Ākhirah, 688; the venue: al-Madrasa al-Mismāriyyah in Damascus. The note in the margin names someone who had been omitted from the register, and another person has signed to verify the addition of that name.

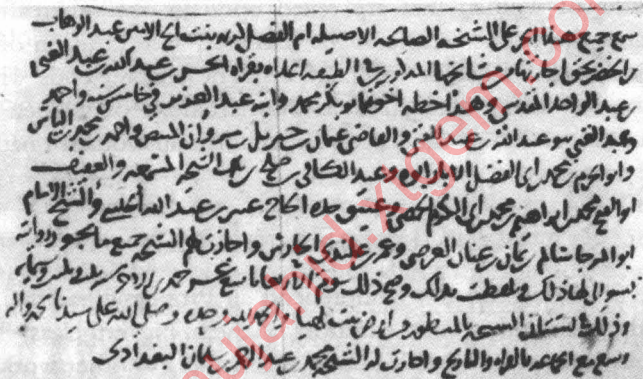
Other places

The sources also record that women taught hadīth in *ribāts*¹ and gardens. For example, *Ḥadīth of Abū ‘Amr ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī* (d. 345) was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl in Ribāt Ibn al-Qalānisī in Qāsyūn on Tuesday, 1 Dhū l-Ḥijjah 743, in a class attended by 31 students.² *Juz’ of Ḥanbal Ibn Ishāq* was read to her in a *ribāt* in Damascus in 733 and attended by a large number of students.³ *Ḥadīth of Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shādhān* (d. 426) was read to Zaynab bint al-Khaṭīb Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥarastānī in Ribāt Baldaq in Damascus in 722.⁴ *Karāmāt al-Awliyā’* of al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl was read to Sitt al-Fuqahā’ al-Wāsiṭiyyah in a *ribāt* in Qāsyūn in 723.⁵

Musnad ‘Abdillāh ibn ‘Umar was read to the great shaykhah and famous *muhaddithah* of Syria Karīmah bint ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) in her garden in 639.⁶ *Karāmāt al-Awliyā’* was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl in the garden of Amīn al-Dīn al-Wānī in the land of al-Arzah in 728.⁷ *Ḥadīth Luwayn* of Abū

¹These *ribāts* were retreats for study and religious reflection, usually located outside major cities; they should not be confused with frontier strongholds and fortresses for which the same name is used. ²MUṬĪ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *Muḥjam al-samā‘āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 110, 312. ³See *samā‘āt* at the end of, *Juz’ ḤANBAL*. ⁴LEDER *et al.*, *Muḥjam al-samā‘āt al-Dimashqiyyah*, 60, 315. ⁵*Ibid.*, 41, 319. ⁶*Ibid.*, 69, 482. ⁷*Ibid.*, 41, 311.

Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Sulaymān al-Miṣṣīṣī (d. 245) was read to Umm al-Faḍl bint al-Amīn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Khaḍir al-Zubayriyyah. in the garden in al-Mayṭūr of Bayt Lahyā in 633. The copy, show on the next page, of the *samāʿ* for this class records, in the usual way, the name of the shaykhah, her *isnād* to the book’s author, and the names of the men and women who attended. It records also that, when asked, the shaykhah gave her *ijāzah* verbally to those who attended. The date and place are given as Wednesday, 19 Jumādā al-Ūlā, 633, ‘in her garden in Mayṭūr in the land of Bayt Lahyā’.¹



¹LEDER *et al.*, *Muḥjam al-samāʿāt al-Dimashqīyyah*, 402. MS 3803 fol. 35^a.

Chapter 7

Women's ḥadīths and narrations

In this chapter, I present some of the Prophetic ḥadīths narrated by the women Companions, the number of them recorded in the Six Books, those narrated by women only, and then those ḥadīths of women that are relied upon in *fiqh*. Thereafter I discuss the women's role in the narration and diffusion of the major kinds of ḥadīth compilations. The chapter ends with a survey of works specialized in the narrations of women and some discussion of the interest of scholars in women's ḥadīths and narrations.

WOMEN'S ḤADĪTHS IN THE SIX BOOKS

The Six Books do not comprehend all Prophetic ḥadīths, nor all the men and women narrators of them. Nevertheless, these books have received a degree of acceptance no other works of ḥadīth have received, so it makes sense in this introductory work to focus on them. The women narrators whose ḥadīths are recorded in the Six Books are Companions, their Successors, then others to the end of the second century.

The dictionary of *muhaddithāt* that I have compiled has accounts of about 2,000 women Companions; the ḥadīths of 130 are recorded in the Six Books. Some of them have only one or two ḥadīths and some hundreds. Imām al-Bukhārī has 31 Companions in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Muslim 36, Abū Dāwūd 75, al-Tirmidhī 46, al-Nasa'ī 65, and Ibn Mājah 60. The number of narrators among the Companions' Successors and others after them up to the second century is about 1200, of whom 130 get a place in the Six Books. The total number of women's ḥadīths in the Six Books is 2,764 ḥadīths, of which 2,539 are from Companions.

The matter of those ḥadīths varies as it does in the ḥadīths narrated by men. Some are common to both men and women narrators, some narrated exclusively by either men or women. A brief overview follows of women's ḥadīths under the different topics. This survey excludes 'Ā'ishah's ḥadīths, partly because they are well known, partly because some of them will come in the chapters on ḥadīth critique and *fiqh*. The ḥadīths narrated exclusively by women are discussed under a separate heading.

On *īmān* (faith), several well-known ḥadīths are narrated by women. An example was quoted earlier (see above, p. 147) from Su'dā al-Murriyyah narrated by her son Yaḥyā ibn Ṭalḥah.

On *ṭahārah* (purification), women are sole narrators of the rites related to matters exclusive to women. However, they have also narrated much else on the topic. Particularly famous is the ḥadīth of al-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh describing the Prophet's *wuḍū'*. Scholars travelled from far and wide to hear this ḥadīth from her. 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Aqīl ibn Abī Ṭālib reports saying: "Alī ibn Ḥusayn [Zayn al-Ābidīn] sent me to al-Rubayyi' bint Mu'awwidh to ask her about the ablution of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*. She described [it] in detail, then she said to him: Your cousin ['Abdullāh] Ibn 'Abbās also came to me and asked me about the description of the ablution of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*."¹ Both 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, a Companion and cousin of the Prophet, renowned for his knowledge and *fiqh*, and 'Alī Zayn al-Ābidīn, a great scholar among the Successors and the grandson of 'Alī and Fāṭimah, referred to this woman for knowledge about the Prophet's *wuḍū'*.

On *ṣalāh* (the rite of prayer) women have narrated ḥadīths on different aspects of it. I mention here only a ḥadīth on prayer on the occasion of eclipse of the sun narrated by Hishām ibn

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṭahārah*, bāb *ṣifat wuḍū' al-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Ṭahārah*, bāb *mā jā'a annabu yabda'u bi mu'akkkhar al-ra's*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭahārah*, bāb *al-rajul yasta'īnu 'alā wuḍū'i-hi fa-yaṣubba 'alay-hi*.

Urwah from his wife Fāṭimah, from her grandmother Asmā' bint Abī Bakr: 'Once there was an eclipse of the sun in the time of the Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*. I entered to [where] 'Ā'ishah [was praying] and said: Why are the people praying? She indicated with her head to the sky, and I said: Is it a sign? She [indicated]: Yes. [...] Afterwards, she described the prayer in detail.¹

On *janāzah* (funeral rites), there is a ḥadīth narrated by three generations of women – Umm 'Īsā al-Jazzār from Umm Ja'far bint Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib, from her grandmother Asmā' bint 'Umayy:

I got up in the morning the day [my husband] Ja'far and his companions suffered. The Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – came to me. I had tanned forty hides and had made flour dough, and I had taken my sons, and washed their faces and oiled them. The Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – called on me and said: O Asmā', where are the sons of Ja'far? I brought them to him, and he embraced them and smelled them, then he got tears in his eyes and wept. I said: O Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – perhaps some news has come to you about Ja'far? He said: Yes. He was slain today. She says: I stood up crying, and the women gathered to me. She says: The Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – started to say: O Asmā', do not say any wrong thing, and do not beat your breast. She says: Then the Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – went until he called on his daughter Fāṭimah, and she was crying out: O uncle! The Messenger of God— *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: On someone like Ja'far one who would weep should weep. Then he said: Make food for the family of Ja'far for they are preoccupied.²

On *ṣiyām* (fasting), there are a number of ḥadīths from women. Abū Ayyūb has narrated that on one Friday when the Prophet called on his wife Juwayriyah bint al-Ḥārith he found

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭabarāh*, bāb *man lam yatwadḍa' illā min al-ghashy al-muthqil*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣalāh*, bāb *ma 'uriḍa 'alā l-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam fi ṣalāt al-kusūf*. ² IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Janā'iz*, bāb *ma jā'a fī l-ṭa'ām yub'athu ilā ahl al-mayyit*.

her fasting: 'The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said to her: Did you fast yesterday? She said: No. Then he said: Do you mean to fast tomorrow? She said: No. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Then break your fast.'¹ From this the scholars have derived that supererogatory fasting on the day of congregation alone, the day when people will be visiting and mixing with one another, is disapproved.

On *ṣakāh* and charity, there are many ḥadīths from the women. One enjoining charity is narrated by Muḥammad ibn 'Amr ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Ḍirār from his aunt 'Amrah bint al-Ḥārith ibn Abī Ḍirār: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: For sure, the world is green and sweet. Whoever gets anything from it in a lawful way, he will be blessed therein. How many a one there is engaging unlawfully in the wealth of God and His Messenger! For him, there is the Fire.'²

On ḥajj: some of the ḥadīths narrated by women related to the rites of the pilgrimage were given earlier. Another example: from Maṣṣūr ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān from his mother Ṣafīyyah bint Shaybah, from Asmā' bint Abī Bakr: 'We left in the state of *iḥrām*. The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: Whoever has *hady* [sacrificial animal] he should continue in *iḥrām*, and whoever does not have *hady*, he should come out of *iḥrām*. She says: I did not have *hady*, so I became *ḥalāl* [to my husband], and my husband Zubayr had *hady*, he did not become *ḥalāl* [to me ...]. She says: Then I put on my [nice] clothes and came out of *iḥrām*; then I came to Zubayr, so he said: Stand away from me. She says: I said [to him]: Are you afraid I will jump on you?'³

Some examples of ḥadīths narrated by women related to food, clothing, business, *imārah* and *jihād* were given earlier. So also on *nikāh* and *ṭalāq* (marriage and divorce), and on this topic

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣawm*, bāb *ṣawm yawm al-jumū'ah*. ² ABŪ NU'AYM AṢBAHĀNĪ, *Ma'rifaat al-ṣaḥābah*, v. 277. ³ MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥajj*, bāb *mā yalzamu man ṭafa bi-l-bayt wa sa'ā min al-baqā'* 'alā al-iḥrām wa tark al-ṭaḥallul; AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Manāsik*, bāb *mā yaf'alu man aballa bi-l-'umrah wa abdā*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Manāsik*, bāb *faskh al-ḥajj*.

others are discussed in the next chapter. On *mīrāth* (inheritance), there is the ḥadīth of Umm Sa'd referred to by Dāwūd ibn al-Ḥusayn: 'I used to read the Qur'ān to Umm Sa'd bint al-Rabī', and then she mentioned a ḥadīth related to inheritance.'¹

On *fitan* (sing. *fitnah*; trials and tribulations, civil strife), there are several ḥadīths narrated by women Companions. Asmā' bint Yazīd al-Anṣārīyyah narrated the long ḥadīth of the Antichrist and the events leading to it; Fāṭimah bint Qays narrated the famous long ḥadīth of Tamīm al-Dārī containing the account of *Jassāsah* and the Antichrist.² And there is the ḥadīth from *umm al-mu'minīn* Ḥafṣah, narrated by 'Abdullāh ibn Ṣafwān, that she said: 'I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – say: An army will head towards this house [the Ka'bah] to invade it. When they reach Baydā', the middle of the army will sink [into the earth] then the front part will cry out to the rear part. And none will be saved except the [one] survivor who brings news [of it].'³

There are a great many ḥadīths from the women on death, the punishment of the grave, and conditions of the Day of Judgment, the Garden and the Fire. Ibn Abī Mulaykah narrated from Asmā' bint Abī Bakr that the Messenger of God said: 'I will be at the *ḥawḍ* (Pool) looking for those from among you coming to drink from it. Some people will be taken away from me. I will say: My Lord, they are from me and from my *ummah*. [The angel] will say: You do not know what they did after you; they continued turning back on their heels.'⁴

On the Hijrah, battles, supplications, good manners, and *ṭibb al-nabī*, the medicine of the Prophet, there are a number of narrations through women. So too, there are many on *shamā'il*, his good qualities and appearance. On the virtues of the Com-

¹ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Farā'id*, bāb *naskh mīrāth al-'aqd bi-mīrāth al-raḥīm*.

² MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan*, bāb *qisṣat al-jassāsah*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Malāḥim*, bāb *fī khabar al-jassāsah*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Fitan* (bāb not indicated by AL-TIRMIDHĪ); IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Fitan*, bāb *fitnat al-dajjāl*. ³ MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Fitan*, bāb *al-khasf bi al-jaysh al-ladhī ya'umm al-bayt*. ⁴ *Ibid.*, *Faḍā'il*, bāb, *dhikr ḥawḍ al-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*.

panions, Sudaysah narrates from Ḥafṣah that she said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: The devil never encountered 'Umar after he embraced Islam but [that] he [the devil] fell on his face.'¹

THE NARRATORS' ELOQUENCE

The qualities of eloquence in the women's narrations have been much remarked, namely narrative fluency, aptness of diction, pertinence and directness – neither ornamenting nor straying from the important matter – concision, and the ease in rhythm of speech that comes from understanding, even mastery, of details that are loaded with meaning for those who have the mind or heart to reflect. It is hardly possible to illustrate these qualities in detail at a remove from the original language, and I will not try to do so. However it is possible, even in translation, to get a sense of the more general elements of rhetorical skill.

Consider, for example, in the ḥadīth of Asmā' bint 'Umayy (cited in the previous section) about the day she receives news of her husband's death, the weight of emotion that is behind her mentioning that 'I got up in the morning the day Ja'far and his companions suffered.' Her stating this at all is a way of affirming that she did not complain that here was another day of anxious uncertainty. Instead she deliberately lists her routine labours of the day, before the Prophet came – her persevering, patient effort matching that of the men on the distant battlefield of Mu'tah. Her narrative (so affecting because in the form of direct speech) emphasizes two things: the tenderness with which the Prophet, being family and friend, feels and conveys the news, and his not neglecting, even at that moment, his duty to teach – in this instance to reform the excesses of the wailing of the Jāhiliyyah which indicates resentment and refusal of what God has caused to pass. In the later part of the narrative, we find the same balance: his feeling grief, and his allowing the kind of

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *wujūb al-iḥdād fī 'iddati al-wafāh wa taḥrīmih fī ḡbayr dhālik illā thalāthata ayyām*.

expression of it that is a true acceptance of what God has caused to pass, which he combines with teaching another reform of custom. On the basis of this ḥadīth, among practising Muslims ever since, entertaining those who come to share the grief of bereavement is not a responsibility of the bereaved family but of their friends. Aṣmā's ḥadīth also records how the Prophet's teaching is practised by himself, the reform promulgated by being implemented in his own family. Then, who would not be willing to follow a man whose teaching them was an expression of his love for them, and vice versa?

As a second example, I cite below, a section of the ḥadīth of 'Ā'ishah about 'the slander' (*ifk*). It is much too long to quote in its entirety. 'Ā'ishah was without doubt what we would now call a child prodigy. At the time of the incident itself she will have been in her middle teens. At the time she reports it, she is an established figure with very formidable powers of intellect and speech and well aware of her capacity, and her responsibility, to inform and guide the community. Her narration weaves together details of social, historical and legal import with her emotions at the time seen through her mature understanding of how, as a believer, she stands in relation to God and to His Messenger. The intensity of her feelings at the time is not diminished but, in her re-telling, those feelings are restrained by the realization that through this crisis she was led to a direct experience of her absolute need of God and dependence on Him. That is the meaning, when relief finally comes, of her explicit refusal to go to her husband, as her mother tells her to do: 'By God, I will not go to him. And I will not praise except God'

The parts of the ḥadīth not quoted below tell us much – when certain verses of the Qur'ān were revealed; the customs that had changed in the period between the incident and the telling of it; how the Anṣār, the Muslims local to Madinah, were not yet sufficiently united by Islam to overcome tribal and clan loyalties; how the slander was deliberately encouraged by a faction in Madinah. For that faction, Islam in Madinah was a political ascendancy that had to some degree displaced or diminished theirs, so their allegiance to Islam was nothing more than a waiting to see which way the wind would blow. However, the

true believers also listened to the slander and, not knowing what to do, were confounded by it and discussing it. Because so much anguish was imposed upon the Prophet himself and his household, the incident served to bring home to the believers the sheer destructiveness of slanderous gossip and the gravity of the sin of indulging in it. Only a few affirmed 'Ā'ishah's innocence; most remained uncommitted, perhaps because that is how they understood the Prophet's behaviour. But he could not have declared her innocent without feeding the malice of the slanderers – he knew before 'Ā'ishah did that in this crisis there was no help but from God. She reports with impeccable fairness what people said, without disguising her feelings about them at that time. Particularly touching is her report that her loving and loved husband asks after her during her illness in a coldly formal way, 'How is that [condition] of yours?'; also the moment when, after turning to her parents in the vain hope that they will say she is innocent, her indignation so overpowers her she forgets the name of the prophet Ya'qūb and invents for him the *kunyah* 'Abū Yūsuf'.

The highest of the many virtues of this ḥadīth is its demonstration that the Revelation, the Qur'ān, was a grace from God only; it could not be called down because of any deserving or needing of it as human beings understand their deserving or being needy. The Book was, for its first audience, a connecting of the divine will directly with a real historical situation, made for ever exemplary by that connection. Yet, its authority and its sending down remained transcendent because both are from God. Only when the transcendence of God is perfectly understood is human prayer perfected; and human need when it has fully grasped that no help is possible except by grace of God is prayer. 'Ā'ishah's report of the *ifk* comprehends all those aspects of the believer's relationship to God and His Book. It shows that a heart filled with faith is not therefore empty of the concerns of this world; it is, instead, much better equipped to deal with them without losing either dignity or direction. 'Ā'ishah distinguishes with a fierce severity between God and His Messenger; it is God who has saved her and Him she praises, none else.

She draws out, in the form of narrative and speech, the moment when she realizes for herself the absolute aloneness of each being before its Creator and its need to be reliant on His being all-just and all-merciful. That quality of reliance upon God is the source from which flow true human agency and dignity.

Where could this understanding have come, if not from God's Messenger, whose complete conveyance of the message is thus also affirmed by this ḥadīth?

ʿĀʾishah is the daughter of Abū Bakr, the first *khalīfah*. His faith was of a quality subtly different from that of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, who succeeded as the second *khalīfah*. Of ʿUmar it can rightly be said that if, after exercising reason and conscience and the wisdom he had got by experience, he reached a decision only to learn that the Prophet in a comparable case had decided otherwise, he *immediately* abandoned his way for the Prophet's way and adhered to it with full adherence; indeed, if need be, he would command others to adhere to it also. Of Abū Bakr, it can rightly be said that his faith was more supple in style, as if ready-conformed to the Prophet's way, so that the need to revise his decision seems never to have arisen. ʿĀʾishah's faith, despite her independence of mind and temperament, was between the two, perhaps a little closer to her father's style than ʿUmar's. When ʿUmar was assassinated it is she who, for his love of God's Messenger, consented to his request to be buried beside the Prophet, a place she had thought to reserve for herself.

Excluding the sections that I have alluded to summarily above, here is her ḥadīth:

[...] After we returned to Madinah, I became ill for a month. The people were spreading the fabricated sayings of the slanderers while I was unaware of anything of all that, but it raised my doubts during my illness that I was not seeing the same sweetness (*lutf*) [of manner] from God's Messenger as I used to see from him when I became ill. He would only come, say *salām* and say, 'How is that [condition] of yours? (*kayfa tī-kum?*)' and leave. That raised my doubts, but I did not sense the evil till I went out while I was [still] weak from the illness. I went out with Umm Mistah [...]

[She] told me the slander of the people of *ifk*. So I heaped illness upon my illness, and when I reached my home, God's Messenger came to

me, and after greeting me, said: How is that [condition] of yours? I said to him: Do you allow me to go to my parents?' For I wanted to be sure about the news through them. God's Messenger allowed me [to go to my parents].

I said to my mother: Mother, what are the people talking about? She said: My daughter, make light of it. For, by God, there has hardly ever been a charming woman who loves her husband and is beloved of him and who has other wives but that they will do a lot against her.

[Ā'ishah] says: Then I said: *Subhān al-lāh!* Are the people really talking in this way?

She says: I wept the whole night till dawn. My tears did not stop and my eyes did not know a particle of sleep. Then in the morning too, I continued weeping.

When the divine inspiration was delayed, God's Messenger called 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Usāmah ibn Zayd to ask and consult them about separating from his household [*sc.* his wife, 'Ā'ishah].

She says: As for Usāmah ibn Zayd, he said what he knew of the innocence of [the Prophet's] household, and what he had in his heart [of respect] for them. Usāmah said: It is your household and we do not know anything except good about them. As for 'Alī [ibn Abī Ṭālib], he said: O God's Messenger! God does not constrain you – women other than her are abundant. Yet, ask the maid-servant who will tell you the truth. On that God's Messenger called Barīrah and said: O Barīrah! Did you ever see anything that aroused your suspicion? Barīrah said to him: By Him Who has sent you with the Truth, I have never seen anything in her that I would conceal except that she is a young girl who falls asleep, leaving her family's dough unattended so that the domestic goats come and eat it.

So, on that day, God's Messenger got up on the pulpit and complained about 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy before his Companions, saying: O Muslims! Who will relieve me of that man who has hurt me with his evil speaking about my household? By God, I know nothing except good about my household. And they have blamed a man about whom I know nothing except good. And he never entered my home except with me. Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh, [one] of the Banū 'Abd al-Ashhal got up and said: O God's Messenger! I will relieve you of him. If he is from the tribe of Aws, then I will cut off his head. And if he is from our brothers [*i.e.* the Khazraj], then command us, and we will carry out your command. On that, a man from the Khazraj got up [...] the two tribes of Aws

and Khazraj got so worked up that they were about to fight [even] while God's Messenger was standing on the pulpit. God's Messenger continued calming them till they became silent and so did he.

All that day I continued weeping, my tears never ceasing, and I did not get a grain of sleep. In the morning my parents were with me and I wept for two nights and a day with my tears never ceasing and I could never sleep, until I thought that the weeping would burst my liver. So, while my parents were sitting with me and I was crying, an Anṣārī woman asked me to grant her admittance. I allowed her to come in, and she sat down and started crying with me.

While we were in this state, God's Messenger came, greeted us and sat down. He had never sat with me since what was said about the matter was said. A month had passed and no divine inspiration came to him about my case. God's Messenger recited *tashāhhud* when he sat down, and then said: 'Amma ba'd. O 'Ā'ishah, I have been informed so-and-so about you. If you are innocent, then God will soon reveal your innocence, and if you have committed a sin, then repent to God and ask Him for forgiveness, for when a slave confesses his sins and asks God for forgiveness, God accepts his repentance.

When God's Messenger had finished his speaking, my tears ceased flowing completely so that I no longer felt a single teardrop flowing. I said to my father: Answer God's Messenger on my behalf as to what he has said. My father said: By God, I do not know what to say to God's Messenger. Then I said to my mother: Answer God's Messenger on my behalf as to what he has said. She said: By God, I do not know what to say to God's Messenger.

Although I was a young girl and had not read much of the Qur'ān, I said: By God! I know for sure that you heard this speech so that it has become planted in your hearts and you have taken it as a truth. Now if I tell you that I am innocent, you will not believe me. But if I admit a matter to you, and God knows that I am innocent of it, you will surely believe me. By God! I find no similitude for me and you except that of Abū Yūsuf [i.e. Ya'qūb, 'alay-hi al-salām] when he said: *Then [there is no recourse but] fitting patience! God it is Whose help is sought* [12. 18]. Then I turned to the other side and lay on my bed.

And God knew then that I was innocent and I hoped that God would reveal my innocence. But, by God, I never thought that God would reveal about my case divine inspiration that would be recited [forever] as I considered myself too unworthy to be talked of by God with

something of my concern. Rather, I hoped that God's Messenger might have a dream in which God would prove my innocence.

But, by God, God's Messenger did not move from his seat and none of the household moved, until it was sent down upon him. So there overtook him the same hard condition that used to overtake him. The sweat was dropping from his body like pearls though it was a wintry day and that was because of the weighty statement that was being revealed to him. When that state of God's Messenger was over, he got up smiling, and the first word he said was: O 'Ā'ishah! God has declared your innocence! Then my mother said to me: Get up and go to him. I said: By God, I will not go to him, and I will not praise except God, Great and Glorious is He.

So God revealed the ten verses *Surely those who spread the slander are a faction among you...* [24.11–20]. God revealed those verses to declare my innocence. [...] ¹

FIQH DEPENDENT ON WOMEN'S HADĪTHS

As I mentioned, there are some ḥadīths that do not have any source, or any reliable source, other than women. A number of them have been the only basis for legal rulings. From the time of the Companions, jurists and scholars never hesitated to refer to women for the knowledge in their keeping. One example, which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 10, is the ḥadīth of Barīrah. She was a slave emancipated by 'Ā'ishah, the story of which provided many good points for discussions among jurists. The great Mālikī scholar Abū l-Husayn ibn Zarfūn even compiled a book about it, called *Fiqh ḥadīth Barīrah*.² Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī says: 'Some imāms have collected the useful points of this ḥadīth, which exceeded three hundred points. I have summarized this [discussion] in *Fath al-bārī*.'³

¹ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Maḡhāzī*, bāb *ḥadīth al-ifk*. ² See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, xxii. 311. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḡabah*, iv. 252.

The ḥadīth of Subay‘ah al-Aslamiyyah

God has commanded in His Book that the waiting period for a widow, before she can re-marry, is four months and ten days; he has also commanded that for a pregnant widow the waiting period is until she delivers her child. Some jurists considered that four months ten days should be the minimum, even if a pregnant widow delivered before that. Subay‘ah al-Aslamiyyah narrated that a few days after the death of her husband, she delivered her child, and asked the Prophet, who allowed her to re-marry. ‘Uthmān, the third caliph, asked Subay‘ah to confirm what she narrated and then judged according to her report. Sulaymān ibn Yasār has narrated that Abū Salamah ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān and ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās had gathered with Abū Hurayrah and were discussing the waiting period for a pregnant widow. Ibn ‘Abbās thought her waiting period is the longer of the two periods. Abū Salamah thought that the waiting period ends with the end of the pregnancy. They continued to disagree. Abū Hurayrah said: ‘I am with my nephew [Abū Salamah]. Then they sent Kurayb, the *mawla* of Ibn ‘Abbās, to Umm Salamah to ask her. She told them about the incident of Subay‘ah al-Aslamiyyah and the Prophet’s permitting her to re-marry after she had delivered her child.¹ Ibn ‘Awn narrated from Ibn Sīrīn that he said: ‘I was sitting in Kufah in a big gathering of Anṣār. Among them was ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Laylā. They mentioned the story of Subay‘ah. I mentioned ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Utbah ibn Mas‘ūd’s saying [the waiting period] is until she delivers. Ibn Abī Laylā said: But his uncle [i.e. ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd] does not say that. I raised my voice and said, I would be foolhardy if I lied about ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Utbah who is [not far away] in another corner of Kufah.’² Imām al-Tirmidhī says after quoting Subay‘ah’s ḥadīth: ‘The practice on this, according to the majority of the people of knowledge from among the Companions

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *inḡidā’* ‘iddat al-mutawaffā ‘anḥā zawju-hā wa ghayri-hā bi-waḍ‘ al-ḥaml. ²AL-NASA’I, *Sunan*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb ‘iddati l-ḥāmīl al-mutawaffā ‘an-hā zawju-hā.

of the Prophet and others, is that the pregnant woman when her husband dies, as soon as she delivers the child, it is allowed for her to [re-]marry. It is the opinion of Sufyān al-Thawrī, al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [ibn Rāhawayh]. Some people of the knowledge from among the Companions and others say that her waiting period is the later of the two dates. But the first opinion is more correct.¹ Imām al-Nawawī says about this ḥadīth in his commentary on *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*: 'The majority of scholars from early and late generations have held to this ḥadīth.'

The ḥadīth of Busrah bint Ṣafwān

Zuhri narrated from 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Bakr ibn Ḥazm al-Anṣārī that he heard 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr say: 'Marwān, while he was governor of Madinah, mentioned that if a man touches his sexual organ, he must repeat his *wuḍū'*. I opposed Marwān and said it does not break the ablution. Marwān said: Busrah bint Ṣafwān has narrated to me that she heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – say: If one touches his sexual organ, he should do ablution. I went on disputing with Marwān until he called a man from among his guards and sent him to Busrah to ask her about her ḥadīth. Busrah's answer was the same as what Marwān had narrated to me from her.² Imām al-Tirmidhī says after quoting Busrah's ḥadīth:

It is the opinion of a number of people from among the Companions of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and [their] Successors. It is the opinion of Imām Awzā'ī, al-Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad [ibn Ḥanbal] and Ishāq [ibn Rāhawayh]. Muḥammad [al-Bukhārī] says: The most sound thing on this subject is the ḥadīth of Busrah. Imām al-Shāfi'ī says: 'Busrah bint Ṣafwān narrated this ḥadīth in the city of Emigrants and Helpers and they were in big number, and no one opposed her.

¹ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *mā jā'a fī l-ḥāmil al-mutawaffā 'anhā ṣawju-hā taḍa'u*. ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-wuḍū' min mass al-dhakar*, AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi'*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-wuḍū' min mass al-dhakar*, AL-NASA'Ī, *Sunan*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-wuḍū' min mass al-dhakar*, IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *al-wuḍū' min mass al-dhakar*.

Rather, it has come to our knowledge that some scholars after receiving her ḥadīth returned to it and gave fatwa according to it. Among them was ‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr. He rejected [the opinion] that ablution can be affected by touching the organ. When he learnt Busrah’s ḥadīth he left his opinion and ruled according to [that]. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar heard her narrate this ḥadīth and after that he continued, until he died, doing ablution after touching. And this [agreeing to differ on details] is the way of the people of jurisprudence and knowledge.¹

The ḥadīth of Umm ‘Atiyyah

This ḥadīth about the washing of the deceased² is considered to be the principal source on the topic. It became very famous. Bukhārī mentions or cites it many times in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, deriving many rulings from it. When Umm ‘Atiyyah moved to Basrah and settled there, a group from among the Companions and Successors heard this ḥadīth on how to wash the dead from her.³ Qatādah has narrated that Ibn Sīrīn learnt washing the dead from Umm ‘Atiyyah,⁴ and Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr records that ‘Ibn Sīrīn, among all the Successors, was the most knowledgeable about washing the dead.⁵ Imām al-Tirmidhī says after quoting the ḥadīth: ‘Umm ‘Atiyyah’s ḥadīth is a sound and good ḥadīth, and the practice is upon it according to the people of knowledge.’⁶ Ibn al-Mundhir says: ‘Among the ḥadīths of washing there is nothing higher than the ḥadīth of Umm ‘Atiyyah, and the imams have relied on it.’⁷

¹ AL-BAYHAQĪ, *Ma‘rifat al-sunan wa al-āthār*, i. 255. ² AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *ghasl al-mayyit wa wuḍū‘ihī bi-almā’ wa al-sidr*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *ghasl al-mayyit*; ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *kayfa ghasl al-mayyit*; AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *mā jā’a fi ghasl al-mayyit*; AL-NASA’Ī, *Mujtabā*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *ghasl al-mayyit bi al-mā’ wa al-sidr*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *mā jā’a fi ghasl al-mayyit*. ³ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 316. ⁴ ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *kayfa ghasl al-mayyit*. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *Fath al-bārī*, iii. 163. ⁶ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Janā’iz*, bāb *mā jā’a fi ghasl al-mayyit*. ⁷ IBN ḤAJAR, *Fath al-bārī*, iii. 164.

‘Ā’ishah’s ḥadīth about the wife of Rifā‘ah al-Quraẓī

According to the Qur’an if a woman has been divorced three times (i.e. divorced irrevocably) by her husband, she cannot be remarried to him unless she marries someone else. ‘Ā’ishah narrated that the divorced wife of Rifā‘ah al-Quraẓī married another man, then wanted to go back to Rifā‘ah. The Prophet said that she could not do so unless she had had relations with her present husband.¹ That condition – that the later marriage must be consummated – is not mentioned in the Qur’an but, on the basis of this ḥadīth, is generally accepted by the jurists and scholars. Imām al-Tirmidhī says: ‘‘Ā’ishah’s ḥadīth is good and sound, and the practice, [according] to all the people of knowledge from among the Companions of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – and others, is on this’, and then he clarifies the condition about consummation.²

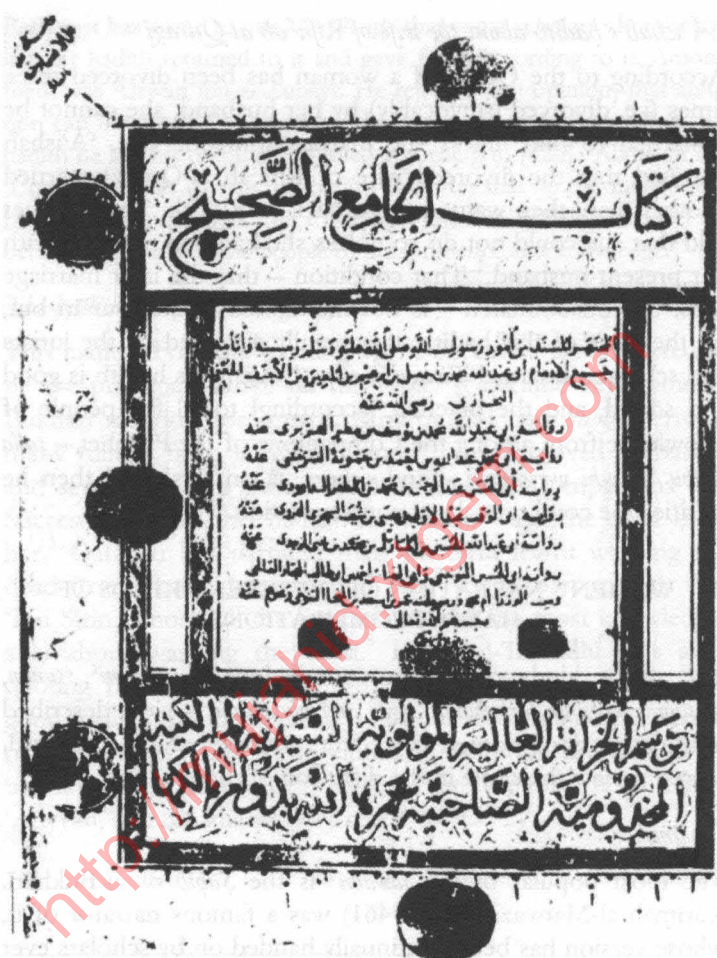
WOMEN’S NARRATION OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF HADITH COMPILATIONS

The major kinds of ḥadīth compilations – *jawāmi‘*, *sunan*, *masānīd*, *ma‘ājim*, *arba‘īnāt*, *ajzā’* and *musalsalāt* – were described in the account of women as students and their reading material. Here I review their role in the diffusion of these books.

Jawāmi‘

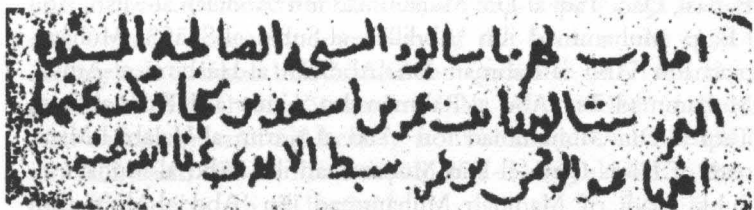
The most popular of the *jawāmi‘* is the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah (d. 461) was a famous narrator of it, whose version has been continually handed on by scholars ever since. Among those who studied the *Ṣaḥīḥ* with her was the renowned traditionist and historian al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.³

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṭalāq*, bāb *man jawwaza al-ṭalāq al-thalāth*. ² AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmi‘*, *Nikāḥ*, bāb *fī man yuṭalliqu imra’ata-hu thalāthan fa yatṣawaju-hā ākhar fa yuṭalliqu-hā qabla an yadkhula bi-hā*. ³ See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 277.



Ornamented title page of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* written in the hand of Ḥāfiẓ Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Nūwayrī (d. 733). Under the main title it is stated that this is the narration of al-Firabrī, and then follows the *isnād* of Sitt al-Wuzarā’ to him.¹

¹ IBN AZZŪZ, *Jubūd al-mar’ah al-Dimashqiyyah fī riwāyat ḥadīth sharīf*, 275. MS, Maktabah al-Wazīr Kubrīlī, no. 362.



Ijāzah from Sitt al-Wuzarā' to narrate her ḥadīth¹

Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar narrated Karīmah's version from his shaykh 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Hindī al-Hallāwī, who studied it with Muḥammad ibn Ghālī ibn Najm al-Dimyāṭī, who studied it with al-Mu'īn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Dimashqī, who studied it with Abū l-Qāsim al-Būṣīrī, with his well known *isnād* to Karīmah.² Ibn Ḥajar also studied it with his shaykh, Hāfiẓ Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, who studied it with Abū 'Alī 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn 'Abdillāh, with his *isnād* to Karīmah.³ The famous narrator of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of the sixth century is Umm al-Bahā' Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādī (d. 539). Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Aḥmad ibn Khalīl ibn Kaykaldī al-ʿAlā'ī: 'Among his eminent narrations is the *Ṣaḥīḥ*, which he studied with Ghānim ibn Aḥmad al-Julūdī, who narrated it from Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Baghdādī.⁴ Another and equally famous narrator of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* is the righteous shaykhah and *musnidah* of her time Sitt al-Wuzarā' bint 'Umar ibn Sa'd ibn al-Munajjā al-Tanūkhīyyah (d. 716) who taught the whole book many times in Damascus and Egypt. Among her students were: the qāḍī of Madīnah 'Abd al-Raḥīm ibn Raziūn al-Ḥamawī, Shaykh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Ja'farī, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Thana' al-Hirmās al-Miṣrī, 'Imād al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī al-Isnā'ī, Shaykh Kamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Dahrūṭī, Muḥammad ibn Khalīl ibn Yarbak al-

¹ IBN AZZŪZ, *Jubūd al-mar'ah al-Dimashqīyyah fī riwāyat ḥadīth sharīf*, 276. MS, al-Maktabah al-Zāhiriyyah Damascus, no. 357 Ḥadīth. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, ii. 77. ³ *Ibid.*, 227. ⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 354–55.

Nābulṣī, Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn Zāfir al-Barlasī, Qāḍī Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Miṣrī, Abū l-Baqā Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Subkī al-Shāfi‘ī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Hāshimī al-Āmidī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Umar al-Khalīlī al-Dārī, Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Ḥalabī l-Miṣrī, qāḍī of Hims Qutb al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Subkī, qāḍī of Madinah Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī, Ibn Khashshāb al-Miṣrī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Sa‘dī al-Miṣrī, Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Miṣrī al-Shāfi‘ī, Ibn Qāḍī Shubḥah, Muḥammad ibn al-Sirāj ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Rāzī, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Fāriqī, Ibn Abī l-Majd al-Dimashqī and others.¹

The last woman who narrated *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with very high *isnād* was ‘Ā’ishah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī al-Maqdisiyyah.² Many famous scholars like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī and Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāṣī studied the whole book from her.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has also been widely taught by the *muḥaddithāt*. Umm al-Khayr Fāṭimah bint Abī l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn al-Muẓaffar ibn Ḥasan ibn Za‘bal al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 532) of Nishapur was a famous teacher of this book. Another popular teacher of it was Zaynab bint ‘Umar ibn Kindī (d. 699). Muḥammad ibn Qawālīj, a teacher of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī studied the whole of it with her. She narrated it from al-Mu‘ayyad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Ṭūsī, who narrated it from Faqīh al-Ḥaram Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn al-Faḍl al-Furāwī, from Abū l-Ḥusayn ‘Abd al-Ghāfir ibn Ḥusayn al-Fārisī, from Abū Aḥmad Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā ibn ‘Amrūyah al-Julūdī, from Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Sufyān, from its author Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. (It is characteristic of the meticulousness of the scholars in this discipline that it is recorded that the Ibrāhīm

¹ *Ibid.*, i. 354-5, ii. 230, 279-280; TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, i. 50, 113, 115, 119, 122-23, 149, 146, 151, 153, 162, 164-65, 183-84, 195, 199, 203, 209. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, ii. 351.

last mentioned did not hear some parts of three of the books in Muslim's compilation from Muslim himself, namely *Ḥajj*, *Waṣāyā* and *Imārah*.¹ Among the teachers of the book in the eighth century was Ṣafīyyah bint Aḥmad ibn Qudāmah (d. 714) and in the ninth, ʿĀʾishah bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī (d. 816), who narrated it with full hearing from Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥasan, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Hādī, from Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Ḥarrānī.²

One of the famous teachers of *Jāmiʿ* of al-Tirmidhī was Khadījah bint ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd ibn Ghashm ibn Muḥammad al-Mardāwī (d.734). Before her Zaynab bint Makkī taught this book several times. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of his teacher Aḥmad ibn Ṣaliḥ ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iskandarānī: 'He heard *Jāmiʿ al-Tirmidhī* in [his] old age from al-ʿUrḍī, who heard it from Zaynab bint Makkī.'³ Al-Tirmidhī's *Shamāʾil* was also popular among women. Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated it from ʿAjībah bint Abī Bakr al-Bāqḍariyyah, who narrated it from al-Qāsim ibn al-Faḍl ibn ʿAbd al-Wāhid and Rajāʾ ibn Hamid ibn Rajāʾ al-Maʿdānī, both narrated it from Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Khuzāʿī, who narrating from al-Haytham ibn Kulayb, who narrated it from its author, Imām al-Tirmidhī.⁴

Sunan

The version of Imām Mālik's *Muwattaʾ*⁵ most popular among Mālikīs and others has been that of Yaḥyā ibn Yaḥyā al-Laythī. Women have narrated this and the less popular versions. For example, Shuhdah (d. 574) transmitted the version of al-Qaʿnabī. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of Imām Abū Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Dulaf (d. 637): He heard *Muwattaʾ* of Mālik, version of al-Qaʿnabī, from Shuhdah.⁵ The version of Suwayd ibn Saʿīd seems to have enjoyed more popularity among the *muhaddithāt*. For example, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated it from Ḍawʾ al-

¹IBN HAJAR, *al-Muʿjam al-muṣṭfaras*, 27–29. ²IBN HAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 350. ³*Ibid*, i. 369. ⁴*Ibid*, ii. 14–18. ⁵See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xxiii. 45.

Ṣabāḥ ʿAjībāh al-Bāqdāriyyah, who heard the whole of it from Abū l-Ḥusayn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq ibn ʿAbd al-Khālīq ibn Yūsuf, from Abū Saʿd Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Malik al-Asadī with his *sanad*. Then it was read to Zaynab bint al-Kamāl in 726 in al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī in Qāsyūn.¹

ʿAjībāh al-Bāqdāriyyah narrated *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd from al-Ḥasan ibn al-ʿAbbās al-Rustamī, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Tustarī and Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shukrawayh, both heard it from Qāḍī Abū ʿUmar al-Hāshimī, who heard it from Abū ʿAlī al-Luʿluʿī, who narrated it from Abū Dāwūd.² Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿAshāʾir al-Ḥalabī: He studied some part of *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd with Fāṭimah bint al-Malik al-Muḥsin Aḥmad ibn al-Sultān Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb.³ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read a part of this *Sunan* with Maryam bint Aḥmad al-Asadiyyah, who heard it from al-Dabūsī, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqayyar, who narrated it from al-Faḍl ibn Sahl al-Isfrāyīnī, who narrated it from al-Khaṭīb al-Bagh-dādī, who narrated it from Abū ʿUmar al-Qāsim ibn Jaʿfar ibn ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Hāshimī, who narrated from Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ʿAmr al-Luʿluʿī, who narrated it from Abū Dāwūd.⁴ A particularly famous narrator of *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* is Zaynab bint al-Kamāl.⁵ Many scholars up to the present have been narrating it through Zaynab’s chain of narration.

Zaynab bint al-Kamāl also narrated the bigger version of *Sunan al-Nasaʿī*.⁶ The smaller *Sunan* of al-Nasaʿī was taught by ʿĀminah bint Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Wāsiṭī,⁷ with the *isnād* of al-Qubbayṭī from Abū Zurʿah Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭāhir, who heard it from al-Dūnī, who heard it from Abū Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Kassār, who narrated it from Abū Bakr

¹ See MUṬĪ AL-ḤĀFIZ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī*, 591. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 322–23. ³ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyīd*, i. 97. ⁴ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Muʿjam al-muṣṭharas*, 29. ⁵ Id., *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, 479–80. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 479–80. ⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 230–31.

Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Sunnī, who narrated from al-Nasa'ī.¹

Sitt al-Fuqahā' bint Ibrāhīm al-Wāsiṭiyyah (d. 726) narrated *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah.² Imām al-Dhahabī says: 'She narrated an abundance of ḥadīths, and the students heard from her *Sunan* of Ibn Mājah and other things.'³ al-Dhahabī also says: 'I read to her for my son 'Abd al-Raḥmān.'⁴

Sunan of al-Dārimī has higher *isnāds* than even al-Bukhārī. Some scholars included it in the Six Books in place of Ibn Mājah, and it was very popular among the *muhaddithāt*. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn narrated the *Thulāthiyyāt* of Imām al-Dārimī from Umm 'Abdullāh Zaynab bint Sharaf al-Dīn 'Abdillāh ibn 'Abd al-Halīm ibn Taymiyyah al-Ḥarrānī, who narrated it from Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥajjār who narrated it from Abū l-Munajjā with its well known *sanad*.⁵ Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn 'Umar al-Qazwīnī says: 'I read the whole *Sunan al-Dārimī* with Sitt al-Mulūk Fāṭimah bint Abī Naṣr ibn Abī l-Badr in Rajab 707 in Bāb al-Marātib, east of Baghdad, who heard all of it with Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn Bahrūz al-Ṭabīb al-Māristānī in Dhī l-Qa'dah 636, who heard it in Sha'bān 553, in Jāmi' al-Manṣūr with Abū l-Waqt 'Abd al-Awwal ibn 'Īsā al-Harawī, who heard it in Jumādā al-Ākhirah 464 from Abū l-Ḥasan al-Dāwūdī, who studied it in Ṣafar 381 with Abū Muḥammad 'Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, who studied it with Abū 'Imrān 'Īsā ibn 'Umar al-Samarqandī, who studied it from its author Imām al-Dārimī.⁶

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar studied part of *Sunan al-Dāraqutnī* with 'Ā'ishah bint al-Najm Abī Bakr al-Bālisīyyah.⁷ Sitt al-ʿArab bint Muḥammad ibn al-Bukhārī (d. 767) narrated *al-Sunan al-kabīr* of al-Bayhaqī.⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, 104–05. ² TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, ii. 375–76. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juz' al-mafqūd min Siyar a'lam al-nubalā'*, 492. ⁴ *Ibid.* ⁵ See *Majmū' fi-bi Rasā'il li-l-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī*, 286. ⁶ Sirāj al-Dīn AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *al-Mashyakha*, MS fol. 45. ⁷ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, ii. 358. ⁸ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyid*, ii. 375.

Masānīd

Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated *Musnad Abū Ḥanīfah* (in the version of Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Ḥārithī) from , who narrated it from Abū l-Khayr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Umar al-Bāghbān, who narrated it from Abū ‘Amr ‘Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Mandah, who narrated it from his father.¹

Sitt al-Wuzarā’ bint ‘Umar al-Tanūkhīyyah and Zaynab bint Sulaymān al-Is‘ardī narrated *Musnad Imām al-Shāfi‘ī* with full hearing from Ibn al-Zabīdī, who narrated it from Abū Zur‘ah.² ‘Ajībah narrated *Musnad al-Ḥumaydī*. Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī al-Qazwīnī says: ‘I studied *Musnad al-Ḥumaydī* with Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Miṣrī al-Azajī, who narrated it from ‘Ajībah al-Bāqdāriyyah with her *sanad* to al-Ḥumaydī.³ Shuhdah narrated *Musnad Musaddad*. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read it with Khadījah bint Ibrāhīm al-Ba‘lbackiyyah who narrated it from al-Qāsim ibn Muẓaffar, who narrated it from ‘Abd ‘Azīz ibn Dulaf, who heard it from Shuhdah, who narrated it from Thābit ibn Bundār, who narrated it from Qāḍī Abū l-‘Alā’ al-Wāsiṭī, who narrated it from Abū Muḥammad ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Wāsiṭī, who narrated it from Abū Khalīfah.⁴

Zaynab bint Makkī was a famous teacher of *Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*. She narrated it with full hearing from Abū ‘Alī Ḥanbal ibn ‘Abdillāh, who heard it from Abū l-Qāsim Ḥibatullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Shaybānī, who heard it from Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Mudhhib al-Baghdādī, who heard it from Abū Bakr al-Qaṭī‘ī, who heard it from ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad, who heard it with his father, the author, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.⁵

¹ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, ii. 482–83. ² *Ibid.*, ii. 555–56. ³ AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *al-Mashaykhah*, MS. fol. 44. ⁴ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 475–76. ⁵ See *al-Maṣ‘ad al-Aḥmad fī khatm Musnad Aḥmad* at the beginning of *al-Musnad*.

Abū l-Faṭḥ ibn Sayyid al-Nās read *Musnad ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd* with Umm Muḥammad Zaynab bint Aḥmad ibn Shukr al-Maqdisiyyah who studied it with Abū l-Munajjā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Lattī, who studied it with Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī, who studied it with ʿAbū l-Ḥasan al-Dāwūdī, who studied it with Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥammūyah, who studied it with Ibrāhīm ibn Khuzaym al-Shāshī, who studied it with ʿAbd ibn Ḥumayd.¹

Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr (d. 600) narrated *Musnad Abū Yaʿlā*. Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar studied this *Musnad* with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmah al-Farāʾidī, who studied it with al-ʿImād Abū Bakr ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Raḍī and Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Maʿālī al-Zabḍānī, both narrating from Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Khaṭīb, who heard it from Fāṭimah bint Saʿd al-Khayr, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir, who narrated it from Abū Saʿd al-Kanjarūdī, who narrated from Abū ʿAmr ibn Ḥamdān from Abū Yaʿlā himself.²

Zaynab al-Shiʿriyyah (d. 615) narrated *Musnad al-Sarrāj*, and Sayyidah al-Mārāniyyah narrated it from her. Abū l-Faṭḥ ibn Sayyid al-Nās studied it with Umm Muḥammad Sayyidah bint Mūsā ibn ʿUthmān al-Mārānī, saying: 'Four shaykhs – Abū Bakr al-Ṣaffār, Abū Rawḥ ʿAbd al-Muʿizz al-Harawī, Ismāʿīl al-Qārī and Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shiʿrī – narrated to us.' Zaynab, Ibn al-Ṣaffār and al-Qārī studied it with Abū Bakr Wajīh ibn Ṭāhir, and Abū Rawḥ and Zaynab also studied it with Zāhir ibn Ṭāhir; and Zaynab alone narrated from Abū l-Muẓaffar ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Qushayrī, all of them studied it with Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khaffāf who studied it with Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Thaqafī al-Sarrāj.³

¹See AL-RAWANDĪ, *Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Yaʿmarī*, i. 256–58. ²IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 482–83. ³See AL-RAWANDĪ, *Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Yaʿmarī*, i. 255–56.

Ma'ājim and Mashyakhāt

Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 524) narrated both the small and large *Mu'jams* of al-Ṭabarānī. Most scholars narrate these two *Mu'jams* through her. Ḥāfiẓ Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī says: 'I read the small *Mu'jam* of al-Ṭabarānī with As'ad ibn Abī l-Futūḥ ibn Rawḥ, who studied it with Fāṭimah, who studied it with Ibn Rīdhah, who studied it with al-Ṭabarānī.'¹ According to al-Ḍiyā', As'ad also narrated the large *Mu'jam* of al-Ṭabarānī from Fāṭimah.² Among her students, Fāṭimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr was also particularly famous for teaching of these two *Mu'jams*.³ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar studied the middle-sized *Mu'jam* of al-Ṭabarānī with 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Ḥallāwī who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Khalīl, who narrated it from Khalīl ibn Badr al-Rārānī, who narrated it from Abū 'Alī al-Ḥaddād, who narrated it from Abū Nu'aym who narrated it from al-Ṭabarānī.⁴

'Ā'ishah bint Ma'mar narrated *Mu'jam Abū Ya'lā*. Ḥāfiẓ Ḍiyā' al-Maqdisī says: 'I studied *Mu'jam Abū Ya'lā* with 'Ā'ishah bint Ma'mar, who narrated it from Sa'd al-Ṣayrafi, who narrated it from Abū Naṣr al-Kisā'i, who narrated it from Ibn al-Muqri', who narrated it from the author.'⁵

Shuhdah narrated *Mu'jam* of al-Ismā'īlī from Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Ḥārithah, who studied it with Abū Bakr al-Barqānī, who narrated it from al-Ismā'īlī.⁶

Shuhdah also narrated *Mashyakhah* of Ibn Shādhān.⁷ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read *Mashyakhah* of Ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im with Fāṭimah and Ḥabībah, daughters of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Abī 'Umar; both of them heard it from Ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im.⁸ Zaynab bint al-Kamāl narrated *Mashyakhah* of Shuhdah. Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī says: 'I studied with Zaynab, *Mashyakhah* of Shuhdah,

¹ ḌIYĀ' AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Thabat al-masmū'āt*, 77. ² *Ibid.*, 77–78. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, ii. 114. ⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 58. ⁵ ḌIYĀ' AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Thabat al-masmū'āt*, 87. ⁶ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 109–10. ⁷ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihris al-fahāris*, ii. 626. ⁸ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 446.

with Zaynab's narration from Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Khayyir, Muḥammad ibn Muqbil, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn al-Sayyidī and al-Agharr ibn Faḍā'il ibn al-ʿUlayyiq, all of them heard it from Shuhdah.¹ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar narrated *Mashyakhab* of Khaṭīb Mardā from Umm Aḥmad Tatar bint al-ʿIzz Muḥammad al-Tanūkhiyyah, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, who narrated from Khaṭīb Mardā.²

Arbaʿūnāt

Fākhirah al-Baghdādiyyah (6th century) narrated *Forty ḥadīths* of al-Nasawī. Ḥāfiẓ Ḍiyā' al-Maqdisī says: 'I read *Forty ḥadīths* of Ḥasan ibn Sufyān al-Nasawī with Muʿayyad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭūṣī, who narrated it from Fākhirah al-Baghdādiyyah, who narrated it from 'Abd al-Ghāfir, who narrated it from Ibn Ḥamdān, from Ḥasan ibn Sufyān. Muḥibb ibn Hilālāh mentions that he has seen the record of al-Ṭūṣī's hearing from Fākhirah.³ Umm 'Amr Ḥafṣah bint Muḥammad ibn Abī Zayd Ḥamkā narrated *Forty ḥadīths* of Ibn al-Muqrī from Ḥusayn ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Khallāl and his cousin Bakhtyār ibn Muḥammad, both of whom narrated it from 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn 'Umar ibn Mūsā ibn Shammah al-Tājir, who narrated it from its author Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī ibn 'Āṣim ibn al-Muqrī.⁴ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read *Forty ḥadīths* of Muḥammad ibn Muslim al-Ṭūṣī with 'Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Bālisī, who narrated it from Zaynab bint al-Kamāl who narrated it from 'Ajībah bint Muḥammad, who narrated it from Mas'ūd ibn al-Ḥasan, who narrated it from 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, who narrated it from Zāhir ibn Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī, who heard 35 ḥadīths of it from Muḥammad ibn Wakī', who heard all of it from Muḥammad ibn Aslam.⁵ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar mentioned *al-Arbaʿūn*

¹ AL-SUBKĪ, *Muʿjam al-shuyūkh*, 678–79. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Muʿjam al-muṣṭafar*, 202. ³ ḌIYĀ' AL-DĪN AL-MAQDISĪ, *Thabat al-masmūʿāt*, 78. ⁴ See the *samāʿāt* at the end of *al-Arbaʿūn* of IBN AL-MUQRĪ included in *Jamharah al-ajṣā' al-ḥadīthiyyah*, 129–30. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 340.

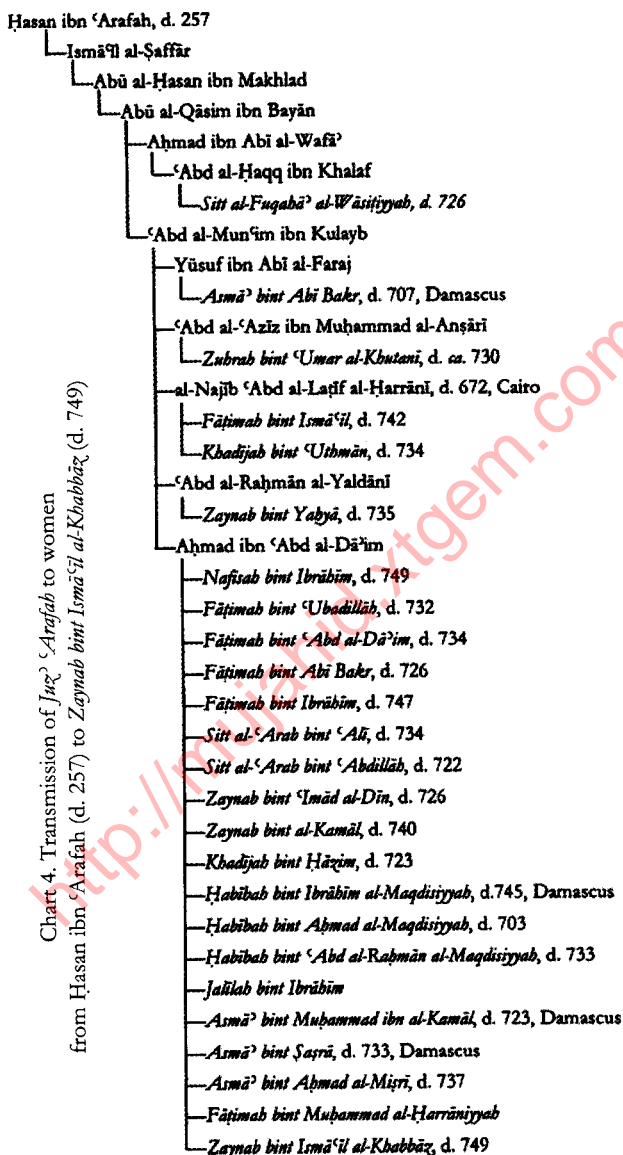
al-buldāniyyah al-mukharrajah min al-Muʿjam al-saghir li-l-Ṭabarānī by al-Dhahabī and said: 'I read it with Abū l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq, who studied it with Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī, who heard it from Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muʿmin al-Ṣūrī and Zaynab bint Makkī, who both narrated it from al-Asʿad ibn Saʿīd ibn Rawḥ and ʿĀʾishah bint Maʿmar, both narrated from Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah, who narrated it from Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah, who narrated from Ibn Rīdhah, who narrated from al-Ṭabarānī.'¹

Ajzāʾ

Some *ajzāʾ* (sing. *juẓʾ*) became very popular among the people of ḥadīth because of their high *isnād*, like *Ṣaḥīfah Hammām ibn Munabbih*, *Juẓʾ al-Anṣārī*, *Juẓʾ ibn ʿArafah* and *Ghaylāniyyāt*. These *ajzāʾ* were taught and learnt by women extensively. Ḥafṣah bint Mulāʿib al-Azajīyyah narrated *Ṣaḥīfah Hammām ibn Munabbih*. Shaykh Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUmar ibn ʿAlī al-Qazwīnī read it with Abū ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Muqrī al-Azajī, who read it with Ḥafṣah bint Mulāʿib in 608. She narrated it from Abū l-Faḍl Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Urmawī, who narrated it from Abū l-Ghanāʾim ʿAbd al-Ṣamad ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Hāshimī by reading it with him in 465, who studied it with Imām Abū l-Ḥasan al-Dāraquṭnī in 385, who studied it with Qāḍī Abū ʿUmar Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Azdī in Ṣafar 319, who narrated it from Ḥasan ibn Abī l-Rabīʿ, who narrated it from ʿAbd al-Razzāq ibn Hammām, who narrated it from Maʿmar ibn Rāshid, who narrated it from Hammām ibn Munabbih, who said: 'This is what Abū Hurayrah narrated to us from the Messenger of God.'²

Shuhdah narrated *Juẓʾ Ibn ʿArafah*. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar studied it with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Qudāmah al-Farāʾidī with his *isnād* to Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn al-Sayyidī, who

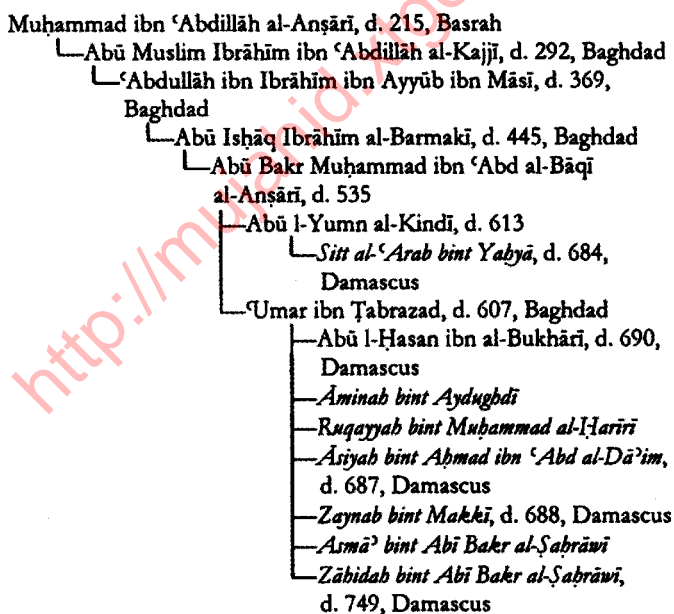
¹IBN HAJAR, *al-Muʿjam al-muḥbaras*, 210–11. ²AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *al-Mashyakhab*, MS. fol. 75–6.



heard it from ‘Abdullāh ibn Aḥmad al-Muthannā who heard it from Shuhdah, who heard it from Ṭirād ibn Muḥammad al-Zaynabī, Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ibn Ṭalḥah, Abū Sa‘d ibn Khushaysh and Ibn Bayān, with the *isnād* to Ibn ‘Arafah.¹

Zaynab bint Makkī (d. 688) narrated *Juz’ al-Anṣārī*. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar says in the account of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa‘d al-Dīn: ‘I have seen the record of his studying of *Juz’ al-Anṣārī* with Abū l-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ayyūb ibn Manṣūr al-Maqdisī, who studied it with Zaynab bint Makkī who heard it from Ibn Ṭabrazad, with his *sanad*.’²

Chart 5. Transmission of *Juz’ al-Anṣārī* to women
from Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anṣārī (d. 215)
to Zāhidah bint Abī Bakr al-Ṣaḥrāwī (d. 749)

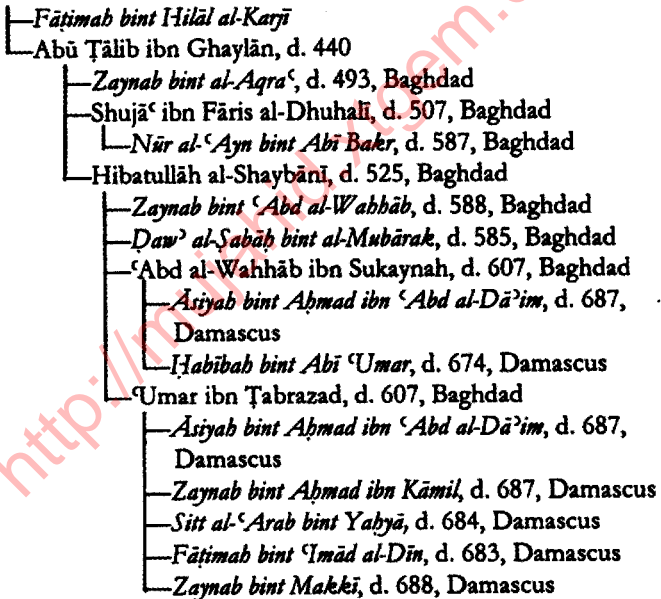


¹ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 504–16. ² *Ibid.*, ii. 459–60.

Zaynab bint al-‘Alam Aḥmad ibn Kāmil al-Maqdisī (d. 687) narrated al-*Ghaylāniyyāt*.¹ Tājanī al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575) narrated *Ḥadīth al-Mukharramī wa-l-Marwazī*,² ‘*Amālī* al-Maḥāmili.³ Juẓ’ Hilāl ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥaffār,⁴ K. al-Ṣamt of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā⁵ and other *ajzā’*. ‘Azīzah bint ‘Alī (d. 600) narrated *Nuskhah Ṭālut*.⁶ Karīmah bint ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Qurashīyyah (d. 641) narrated Juẓ’ *Luwayn*,⁷ and ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Alī ibn ‘Umar al-Ṣinhājiyyah (d. 739) narrated Juẓ’ *al-Biṭāqah*.⁸

Chart 6. Transmission of al-*Ghaylāniyyāt* to women from Abū Bakr al-Shāfi‘ī (d. 354) to Zaynab bint Makkeī (d. 688)

Abū Bakr al-Shāfi‘ī, d. 354



¹Ibid., ii. 261. ²Ibid., 19–20. ³Ibid., ii. 234. ⁴Ibid., ii. 346. ⁵Ibid., ii. 497.

⁶Ibid., ii. 54. ⁷Muḥammad IBN JĀBIR WĀDĪ ĀSH, *al-Barnamaj*, 240. ⁸IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 124–25.

Musalsalāt

As I mentioned earlier, *musalsalāt* are many, and some are compiled, so we find the narrators of most of these *musalsalāt* also narrated the major compilations of them. For example, Hind bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Urmawī heard *Musalsalāt al-Ibrāhīmī* from Sitt al-‘Arab bint Muḥammad ibn al-Fakhr, who narrated it from her grandfather, who narrated it from Abū l-Yumn al-Kindī, who narrated it from Sibṭ al-Khayyāt, who narrated it from its author.¹

Al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah is the most widely transmitted of all, and indeed scholars to this day narrate it to their students as their first ḥadīth. Great numbers of women narrated it; it will suffice by way of example to mention just those women from whom Ḥāfiz Ibn Ḥajar received it. They are: Sārah bint Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī,² Sūmlak bint al-Fakhr ‘Uthmān ibn Ghānim al-Ja‘fariyyah,³ Maryam al-Adhra‘iyyah, and Ghazāl the slave of al-Qalqashandī.⁴

Besides *al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah*, women also narrated others such as *Musalsal bi-qirā’at sūrat al-Ṣaff*, *Musalsal bi-l-samā‘*, *Musalsal bi-l-aswadayn*. Amatullāh al-Dihlawiyyah (d. 1357) even narrated *Musalsal bi qabḍ al-libyah*. In this *musalsal*, every narrator says certain words while holding his beard. Her student, Shaykh Yāsīn al-Fādānī, narrated that he heard this *musalsal* from her while she was holding her chin.

Abundance of their narrations

Some of the women, like Shuhdah al-Kātibah, ‘Ajībah al-Bāq-dāriyyah, Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, Fāṭimah bint al-Munajjā, and Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī and her sister ‘Ā’ishah, taught and narrated a huge number of small and large books. As an example, below is a list of the books taught and narrated by Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Munajjā (d. 803):

¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 360. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Mu‘jam al-muṣṭafar*, 162. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 617. ⁴ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Mu‘jam al-muṣṭafar*, 221–22.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī

al-Mu'jam al-ʿalī li-l-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḥanbalī

Mu'jam al-Taḡī Sulaymān b. Ḥamzah b. Abī ʿUmar

Mashyakḥ Abī Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥusayn

b. Yahyā b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Qibābī

K. al-Sīrah al-nabawīyyah taḥdhīb Ibn Hishām min al-Sīrah al-kubrā li-Ibn

Ishāq

Juzʿ fi-hi sittah majālis min amālī Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. Sulaymān b. al-

Ḥārith al-Bāghindī al-Wāsiṭī

K. al-awāʿil li-Abī Bakr b. Abī Shaybah

K. al-atʿimah li-ʿUthmān b. Saʿīd al-Dārimī

K. al-qaḍāʾ wa al-shubūd li-l-Naqqāsh

K. Faḍāʾil al-Ṣaḥābah takehrij Abī ʿAlī al-Baradānī min ḥadīth Abī l-Fawāris

Ṭirād b. Muḥammad al-Zaynabī

K. Faḍāʾil al-Imām al-Shāfiʿī li-Ibn Shākir al-Qaṭṭān

Juzʿ from the Ḥadīth of al-Naqqāsh, narration of Abū Muṭʿ from him

K. al-karam wa-l-jūd li-l-Barjalānī

Ḥadīth al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd al-ʿAskarī

K. birr al-wālidayn li-l-Bukhārī

K. dhamm al-liwāṭ li-l-Haytham b. Khalaf al-Dūrī

K. Faḍāʾil Mālik b. Anas

K. Faḍl al-ramy li-l-Qarrāb

K. al-Qanāʿah li-Abī l-ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Masrūq

K. al-Farāʾid al-mustakbrajah min ḥadīth Sufyān b. Saʿīd al-Thawrī

K. al-Khiḍāb li-Abī Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAmr b. Abī ʿĀsim

K. al-ʿUḍḥah wa-l-infirād li-Abī Bakr b. Abī l-Dunyā

K. Dhamm al-malāḥi li-Ibn Abī l-Dunyā

K. al-ʿilm li-Yūsuf b. Yaʿqūb al-Qāḍī

K. al-Qanāʿah li-Abī Bakr b. Abī l-Dunyā

al-Mu'jam al-kabīr li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

K. al-Duʿāʾ li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

K. Amthāl al-ḥadīth li-l-Rāmahurmuzī

K. al-Mudārāḥ li-Ibn Abī l-Dunyā

K. al-Iʿtikāf li-Abī l-Ḥasan al-Ḥammāmī

K. al-ʿIshrah li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

K. al-Ḥadāyā li-Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Ḥarbī

K. al-murūʾah li-l-Darrāb

K. al-ʿilm li-Abī Bakr Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Saʿīd al-Marwazī

K. Faḍāʾil al-Qurʾān li-Ibn al-Durays

- K. al-Bukā' li-Ja'far b. Muḥammad b. al-Mustafād al-Firyābī*
K. al-Manāsik li-l-Ṭabarānī
Ḥadīth al-Mukhalliṣ takbrīj Abī l-Faṭḥ b. Abī l-Fawāris
Mashyakḥab Ya'qūb b. Sufyān
Ḥadīth Abī Bakr b. Khallād
Ḥadīth 'Abdullāh b. 'Alī al-Sufunnī
Musnad Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ of Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm al-Dawraqī
'Awālī 'Abd al-Raḡḡāq
K. al-Ṣalāh from Muṣannaf 'Abd al-Raḡḡāq
Ḥadīth Abī Muḥammad 'Abdullāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-'Uthmānī
Fawā'id al-Zubayr b. Bakḡār
Ḥadīth Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī
Ḥadīth 'Alī b. Ḥarb
Intikḥāb al-Silafī 'alā al-Sarrāj
Amālī al-Maḥāmili min riwāyat al-Aṣḥabāniyyīn
Ḥadīth Abī 'Amr 'Uthmān b. Aḥmad b. al-Sammāk
Ḥadīth Abī Ja'far b. al-Munādī
Fawā'id Abū 'Amr b. Ḥamdān
al-Jawāhir wa-l-la'ālī fī al-abdāl wa-l-'awālī li-Abī l-Qāsim b. 'Aṣākir
al-Safinah al-Baghdādīyyah
Ḥadīth Ḥajīb b. Aḥmad al-Tūṣī
'Awālī al-Layth b. Sa'd
Ḥadīth Abī Muḥammad b. Sa'id
Amālī Abī Muṭī'
Abdāl al-Ḥāfiḡ al-Dīyā'
Ḥadīth 'Alī b. al-Ja'd
Ḥadīth Abī l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Ḥammāmī
Amālī Abī l-Qāsim 'Abd al-Malik b. Muḥammad b. Bisrān
al-Thaqafīyyāt
Ḥadīth Abī Ja'far Muḥammad b. 'Amr b. al-Bakhtarī
Amālī Ibn al-Jarrāb
Ḥadīth al-Khurāsānī
Ḥadīth Ḥanbal b. Ishāq al-Shaybānī
Ḥadīth Abī Muḥammad 'Abdullāh b. 'Alī al-Ābnūsī
Amālī al-Bāghindī
Musnad Aḥmad b. Manī' al-Baghawī
Ḥadīth 'Alī b. 'Abd al-'Azīḡ al-Baghawī 'an Abī 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b.
Sallām
Ḥadīth Abī 'Abdillāh Muḥammad b. Makhlād

Ḥadīth Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Aswārī

Ḥadīth Muṭayyan

Amālī Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Yahyā b. ʿAbdūkūyah

Fawā'id Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh b. al-Ḥusayn al-Aṣḥabānī

Ḥadīth Abī Yaʿlā Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. al-Muthannā

Juzʾ Kākū

Ḥadīth Abī Nuʿaym

al-Muntakhab min ḥadīth Abī Kurayb Muḥammad b. al-ʿAlāʾ b. Kurayb

Ḥadīth Abī l-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. Zayd b. ʿAlī b. Shabrayār

ʿAwālī Abī l-Shaykh al-Aṣḥabānī

ʿAmālī Abī l-Shaykh al-Aṣḥabānī

Amālī l-Ustādh Abī Ṭābir Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmish al-Ziyādī

al-Aḥādīth al-latī khūlifa fī-hā Mālik fī-l-Muwattā li-Abī l-Ḥasan al-

Dāraqutnī

Ḥadīth Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī

*Arbaʿuna ḥadīthan min riwāyah Abī l-Faṭḥ ʿAbd al-Waḥḥāb b. Muḥammad
b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ṣābūnī*

al-Akḥbār wa-l-ḥikāyāt wa-l-nawādir min riwāyah Daʿlaj b. Aḥmad

Ḥadīth Abū ʿAlī b. al-Sawwāf

ʿAwālī Karīmah bint ʿAbd al-Waḥḥāb al-Zubayriyyah

al-Kanjarūdhīyyāt

Fawā'id Zābir b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī

Fawā'id Sammūyah

Amālī Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shīrāzī

Ḥāl Abī Aḥmad al-ʿAskarī li al-Silafī

Ḥadīth Abī Muslim Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdillāh b. Muslim al-Kajjī

K. al-Fitan of Abī Muslim Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbdillāh b. Muslim al-Kajjī

K. al-Arbaʿin of Ibn Shanbūyah

Ḥadīth Asmāʾ bint Aḥmad b. ʿAbdillāh al-Bahrāniyyah

Ḥadīth Muḥammad b. Juḥādab

Ḥadīth Qutaybah b. Saʿīd

Ḥadīth Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Naysābūrī (Ibn ʿUlāyyik)

al-Muntaqā min ʿawālī Ibrāhīm b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Shīrāzī

Ḥadīth Māmūn b. Hārūn

Ḥadīth Abī Bakr b. al-Muqrī

Ḥadīth Abī Bakr Aḥmad b. Kāmil, al-Qādī Abī ʿAbdillāh Muḥammad b.

ʿAbdillāh b. Aʿlam, Aḥmad b. ʿUthmān al-Admī

Ḥadīth al-Ḍabb li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

Ḥadīth Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ghaḥfār b. Usḥab

Majālis Abī l-Qāsim ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Huraṣī

Musnad Kaʿb b. Mālik wa-Abī Ayyūb al-Anṣārī min Musnad Abī ʿAmr

Aḥmad b. Ḥaẓīm b. Abī Gharāḥ al-Kūfī

Ḥadīth Ibn Abī Gharāḥ

K. al-Intiṣār li-Imāmay al-amṣār li-Abī l-Faḍl Muḥammad b. Ṭābir al-Maqdisī

Ḥadīth Sufyān al-Thawrī wa Shuʿbah wa Mālik wa Abī Ḥanīfab wa jamāʿah min al-muqillīn of al-Bakkāʿī

K. al-Tafsīr ʿan Sufyān b. ʿUyaynah

Ḥadīth Abī l-Husayn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-ʿAbnūsī

Ḥadīth Abī Yaʿlā al-Khalīl b. ʿAbdillāh al-Khalīl al-Qazwīnī fī l-qabaqabah wa-ghayri-hā

Fawāʿid Yūsuf b. ʿĀsim al-Rāzī

Ḥadīth Abī Bakr Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAlī Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Hamdānī

Ḥadīth Nāfiʿ b. Abī Nuʿaym al-Qārī

Ḥāl al-ʿAbbās li-Abī Ṭābir al-Silafī

Ḥadīth Abī Bakr b. Khuzaymah (Fawāʿid al-fawāʿid)

Amālī Abī l-Qāsim ʿIsā b. ʿAlī b. ʿIsā b. al-Jarrāḥ

Ḥadīth Abī Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭābit

Ḥadīth Abī ʿUmar ʿAbdillāh b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb

Gharāʾib Shuʿbah

Musnad Raqabah b. Miṣqalah li-Abī l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī

al-Muʿjam al-ʿAlī li-Qāḍī al-Hanbalī

Nuḥbat al-Huffāẓ li-Abī Mūsā al-Madīnī

Ḥadīth al-ʿAṭarudī li-Abī Nuʿaym al-Aṣbahānī

Ḥadīth al-Ḍiyāʾ min Shuyūkhī-hi

al-Dhayl ʿalā aḥādīth al-ʿAṭarudī

Ḥadīth Abī Saḥl Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbdillāh b. Ziyād al-Qaṭṭān

Ḥadīth al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Ashyab

K. Ṭuruq man kadhaba ʿalayya li-Abī Muḥammad b. Saʿīd

Ḥadīth Ibn Maʿrūf ʿan shuyūkhī-hi

K. Ṭuruq man kadhaba ʿalayya li-l-Ṭabarānī

K. al-Aḥādīth al-mukhtārāh mim mā laysa fī l-Ṣaḥīḥayn aw aḥādī-himā li-l-

Ḥāfiẓ Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Maqdisī

K. al-Amr bi-ittibāʿ al-Sunan li-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyāʾ

Manāqib aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth li-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyāʾ

K. al-Ṭibb al-nabawī li-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyāʾ

Ṭuruq ḥadīth al-ḥawḍ li-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyāʾ

Faḍl al-ʿAshr wa-l-udḥiyyah li-Ḥāfiẓ al-Ḍiyāʾ

K. al-Nahy 'an sabb al-aṣḥāb li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
'Awālī l-asānīd li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
al-Ruwāḥ 'am muslim li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Muwāfaqāt Sulaymān b. Harb li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Muwāfaqāt Rawḥ b. 'Ubādah li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Muwāfaqāt 'Abdillāh b. Yazīd al-Muqrī li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Muntaqāh min 'awālī 'Abdillāh b. Bakr wa 'Abdillāh b. Numayr wa Abī
'abd al-Raḥmān al-Muqrī
Muntaqāh min 'awālī Sa'īd b. Maṣṣūr
'Awālī Abī 'Āsim al-Dahḥāk b. Makhlād
'Awālī Sulaymān b. Dāwūd al-Hāshimī
'Awālī Abī Nu'aym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn
Muntaqāh min al-ruwāḥ 'an al-bukhārī
Muntaqāh min faḍā'il al-shām
Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
K. Dhikr al-ḥurūf wa al-ṣawt li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
K. al-Ṭibb al-nabawī li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Ṭuruq ḥadīth al-ḥawḍ al-nabawī li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
al-Ruwāḥ 'an Muslim li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
K. al-Ba'th li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
Muntaqāh min K. al-Ikhtisās fī ahwāl al-mawqif wa al-iqtisās li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'
*al-Abdāl al-'awāl li-Hāfiẓ al-Diyā'*¹

COLLECTIONS OF THE WOMEN'S NARRATIONS

The ḥadīths and narrations of many of the women scholars have been compiled separately. I list below a selection, with the briefest of notes, from the more famous of those compilations, making some effort to pick from different periods:

Musnad 'Ā'ishah. 'Ā'ishah, the wife of the Prophet, ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam, narrated from him a lot of ḥadīths. In *Musnad* of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, there are 2405 ḥadīths narrated by her. Abū Bakr ibn

¹ *Majmū' fīhi Rasā'il li-l-Hāfiẓ IBN NAṢIR AL-DĪN AL-DIMASHQĪ*, 296–98; IBN HAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, ii. 389–434; *idem*, *al-Mu'jam al-mufabaras*, 56, 60, 65, 71, 95, 109, 111, 124–5, 137–38, 175, 183, 222, 238, 255, 257, 266, 317, 325, 344, 353, 364; 'Abd al-Ḥayy AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihri al-fabāris*, ii. 615–17, 937.

Abī Dāwūd collected those ḥadīths of ‘Ā’ishah which are narrated by Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from ‘Ā’ishah in a *juḥ* called *Musnad ‘Ā’ishah*. The book does not include all ḥadīths of ‘Ā’ishah nor all the narrations of Hishām ibn Urwah from his father from ‘Ā’ishah. Only a single manuscript of it, in an unremarkable hand and with some marginal annotations, is known; it is held in al-Maktabah al-Zāhiriyyah in Damascus. However, it does record many *samā’āt* of great scholars like al-Ḍiyā’ al-Maqdisī, Ibn al-Bannā’, Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī and others. The manuscript has been edited by Abū l-Ghaffār ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Ḥusayn al-Balūshī; it was published in 1405 [1985] by Maktabat al-Aqṣā from Kuwait.

al-Istī‘āb li-mā istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā l-aṣḥāb. Besides narrating a lot of ḥadīths and giving fatwas, ‘Ā’ishah critiqued the narrations and opinions of many Companions. Imām Abū Maṣṣūr ‘Abd al-Muḥsin ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī al-Shihī al-Baghdādī (d. 489) compiled her critique in a *juḥ*. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar has mentioned this *juḥ* and narrated it.¹ Uzay Shams obtained the only manuscript of it from Khudā Baksh Library, Patna and edited it; it was published by al-Dār al-Salafiyyah in Bombay in 1416 [1996]. Badr al-Dīn al-Zarkashī (d.794) included most of it in his *al-Ijābah li-irād mā istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā al-aṣḥāb*. This was published in Damascus in 1939, edited by Sa’id al-Afghānī; a third edition appeared from Beirut in 1400 [1980]. Ḥāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī (d. 911) summarized al-Zarkashī’s work and named it *Ayn al-Iṣābah fī istidrāk ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā al-aṣḥāb*. It was published in 1396 [1976] from Azamgarh, India as an appendix to *Sīrah ‘Ā’ishah* by S. Sulaymān Nadwī. This edition of 1976 unfortunately has many mistakes. I have benefited from all three of these books, added to them and compiled a more comprehensive work under the title *al-Istī‘āb li-mā istadrakathu ‘Ā’ishah ‘alā al-aṣḥāb*.

Musnad Fāṭimah. Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī collected all ḥadīths of Fāṭimah, and those ḥadīths that refer to her virtues in a *juḥ* named *Musnad Fāṭimah al-Zabrā’ raḍī Allāhu ‘an-hā wa-mā warada fī faḍli-hā*. It has 184 ḥadīths in all in no particular order, with 28 Prophetic ḥadīths, and al-Suyūṭī did not write a preface or annotate the work.

Juḥ Bībā. This is a *juḥ* of ḥadīths related to the great and long-lived shaykhah, Umm al-Faḍl, Umm ‘Izzā Bībā bint ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-

¹IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Muḥjam al-muṣḥarar*, 59.

Harthamiyyah al-Harawiyyah (d. 474). It was published, edited by 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Farīwā'ī, by Dār al-Khulafā li al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, Kuwait in 1406. Its one hundred pages contain 119 ḥadīths. The editor's introduction has a biographical account of Bibā, with the names of her teachers and her famous students. It is a very high *juḥ*². Al-Dhahabī says: 'She has a *juḥ*' which is known by her name.'¹ Ibn Rushayd al-Sabtī narrated it with his *isnād* to her.² Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar read it twice with his shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn Aḥmad al-Tanūkhī,³ with his shaykh Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr ibn 'Abd al-Hādī,⁴ and with Abū Hurayrah ibn al-Dhahabī.⁵

Bibā bint 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah, d. 477, Herat

└ Abū l-Waqt 'Abd al-Awwal ibn 'Isā al-Harawī, d. 553

└ Abū l-Munajja 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Latī, d. 635

Chart 7. Transmission of *Juḥ* Bibā to women
from *Bibā bint 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah* (d. 477)
to 'A'ishah bint 'Abd al-Hādī (d. 816)

- └ *Khadījah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī*
- └ *Iḥabībah bint Sharaf al-Dīn ibn Abī 'Umar*
- └ *Ṣafīyyah bint Muḥammad ibn 'Isā*
- └ *Khadījah bint Abī al-Faḍl Sulayman*
- └ *Iḥabībah bint 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad*
- └ *Fāṭimah bint 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Malik*
- └ *Khadījah bint 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd al-Malik*
- └ *Ṣafīyyah bint Aḥmad ibn Abī 'Abdillāh*
- └ *Zaynab bint 'Abdillāh ibn 'Umar*
- └ *Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Muḥammad*
- └ *Khadījah bint 'Isā*
- └ *'A'ishah bint Maḥfūẓ ibn Hilāl*
- └ *Amat al-'Azīz Khadījah bint Yūsuf ibn Ghunaymah*
- └ *Ṣafīyyah bint Sa'īd*
- └ *Fāṭimah bint 'Abd al-Ghanī*
- └ *Zaynab bint 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn 'Ayyāsh*
- └ *Zaynab bint Jābir ibn Iḥabīb al-Khabbāz*
- └ Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abī Tālib al-Ḥajjār, d. 730, Damascus
- └ 'A'ishah bint 'Abd al-Hādī, d. 816, Damascus

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Ibar*, ii. 336. ² Ibn Rushayd al-Sabtī, *Mil' al-'ayyab*, v. 223. ³ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majma' al-mu'assas*, i. 119. ⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 272. ⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 152.

Juzʿ Bībā has always been immensely popular and its teaching attended by large audiences. One reading of this *Juzʿ*, with Abū l-Munajjā ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar al-Lattī in al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī in Qāsyūn, Damascus on Monday, 24 Shawwal 633, was attended by 338 people.¹

Mashyakhab Shuhdah. This *Mashyakhab* of Shuhdah bint Abī Naṣr Aḥmad ibn al-Faraj al-Baghdādī al-Ibrī (d. 574) was compiled in her lifetime by her student ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Mubārak ibn al-Akhḍar (524–611). Most of its 114 narrations are Prophetic ḥadīths. In this work, Shuhdah has narrated from 27 of her shaykhs. Dr. Rafaat Fawzi ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib edited it from a MS of 26 folios in the library of Kaprili in Turkey. It was published from Cairo in 1415 [1994]. It is a well-known *mashyakhab*. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of her: ‘She had a *mashyakhab* which we have learnt.’² Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read it with Ibrāhīm al-Tanūkhī, who read it with Abū l-ʿAbbās al-Ḥajjār, Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Ḥajjāj al-Mizzī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Fakhr and Muḥibb ʿAbdullāh ibn Aḥmad ibn al-Muḥibb with their *isnāds*.³

Mashyakhab Khadījah. This *Mashyakhab* of Khadījah bint al-Qāḍī al-Anjab Abū l-Makārim al-Mufaddal ibn ʿAlī al-Maqdisī (d. 618) was compiled by Ḥāfiẓ Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī and read to her.⁴

Mashyakhab Karīmah. This *Mashyakhab* of the great Syrian shaykhah Umm al-Faḍl Karīmah bint Abī Muhammad ʿAbd al-Waḥhāb al-Qurashīyyah al-Zubayriyyah (d. 641) was compiled by Ḥāfiẓ Abū ʿAbdillāh al-Birzālī in eight *ajzāʾ*.⁵ Al-Dhahabī studied it.⁶ Karīmah also has a *juzʿ* containing her ḥadīths of high *isnād*, which Ibn Ḥajar studied with Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad al-Dimashqīyyah.⁷ There is mention in the sources of a third *juzʿ* containing *Aḥādīth musāwāh wa muṣafahāt wa muwāfaqāt wa abdāl wa aḥādīth ʿawāl*.⁸

Mashyakhab ʿAjībah. About this *Mashyakhab* of the great and long-lived shaykhah, Ḍawʿ al-Ṣabāḥ ʿAjībah bint Abī Bakr al-Bāqḍariyyah (d. 643), al-Dhahabī says: ‘She was unique in the world and her *Mashy-*

¹See *al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī*, 509–12. ²AL-DHAHABĪ, *Sīyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xx. 542. ³IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, i. 144–45. ⁴AL-MUNDHIRĪ, *al-Takmilah*, iii. 42. ⁵Id., *Taʾrīkh al-Islām (sub anno 641–650)*, 94. ⁶Id., *Sīyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xxiii. 93. ⁷IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majmaʿ al-muʿassas*, ii. 418. ⁸See MUṬʿĪ AL-ḤĀFIẒ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī*, 337.

akbah was in ten *ajzā*’.¹ Abū Ḥafṣ Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī al-Qazwīnī narrated it from many, among them: Rashīd al-Dīn Abū ‘Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Qāsim al-Muqri, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Naṣīr ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥalāwah, Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Anbārī, ‘Afīf al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin ibn Abī l-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd al-Ghaffār al-Azazī, Sharaf al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Isā ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ma‘ālī ibn Ḥamad al-Muṭa‘am and Sitt al-Mulūk Fāṭimah bint ‘Alī ibn ‘Alī ibn Abī l-Badr.²

Mashyakhab Sayyidah al-Mārāniyyah. This is the *Mashyakhab* of Sayyidah bint Mūsā ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Dirbās al-Mārāniyyah (d. 695). Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read the second part of it with Zayn al-Dīn al-‘Irāqī and Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī.³ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī also narrated it.⁴

Juz’ Nuḍār bint Abī Ḥayyān. Nuḍār bint Abī Ḥayyān (d. 730) studied with al-Dimyāṭī and a group of the students of al-Zabīdī, and she got *ijāzahs* from a group of teachers. She taught and also compiled this collection of her ḥadīths.⁵

Mashyakhab Wajīhah al-Ṣa‘īdiyyah. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar says about this *Mashyakhab* of Wajīhah bint ‘Alī ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sulṭān al-Anṣāriyyah al-Ṣa‘īdiyyah al-Iskandarāniyyah: ‘Taḳī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arām compiled her *Mashyakhab*. I read part of it with Tāj al-Dīn ibn Mūsā, who heard it from her. Ibn Rāfi‘ also compiled a *mashyakhab* for her before that.⁶ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read the whole of this *Mashyakhab* with Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Iskandarānī.⁷ Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1382) also narrated it.⁸

Mashyakhab Zaynab al-Sulamīyyah. This *Mashyakhab* of Zaynab bint al-Khaṭīb Yaḥyā ibn Izz al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn ‘Abd al-Salam al-Sulamī al-Dimashqīyyah (d. 735) has been extensively narrated by the scholars. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar read it with Abū Bakr ibn Ibrāhīm al-Farā‘idī.⁹

Mashyakhab Zaynab bint al-Kamāl. Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated this *Mashyakhab* of Zaynab bint al-Kamāl Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, xxiii. 233. ² AL-QAZWĪNĪ, *al-Maskaykhab*, MS. fol. 136. ³ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-Mu‘assas*, ii. 210.

⁴ See AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihri al-fahāris*, ii. 653. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, iv. 395. ⁶ *Ibid.*, iv. 406. ⁷ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-Mu‘assas*, ii. 492.

⁸ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihri al-fahāris*, ii. 654. ⁹ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-Mu‘assas*, i. 493.

al-Raḥīm ibn ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (d.740).¹ Ibn Ḥajar says: ‘I read *Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-Kamāl* with ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Bālīsī in two huge *juḡ*’, compiled by Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘d.² Zaynab also has a *Mashyakhah al-mashā’ikh*, which Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī has narrated with his *sanad* to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, who narrated it from Umm Muḥammad Ās bint Aḥmad ibn Ḥassān, who narrated it from Zaynab herself.’³ She also has a *juḡ* containing a selection of ḥadīths, about which ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī says: ‘I have a *juḡ*’ of ḥadīths of Umm ‘Abdillāh Zaynab bint al-Kamāl, compiled by Ḥāfiẓ ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī, it contains 31 ḥadīths, and there are some records of hearing by imāms in it.’⁴ Another book of hers, *Muwāfaqāt ‘āliyat*, compiled by al-Birzālī, is referred to by Ibn Ḥajar, who says in his account of his Shaykh Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣāliḥī: ‘I read with him the second ten from *Muwāfaqāt Zaynab bint al-Kamāl*, compiled by al-Birzālī.’⁵ Ibn Ḥajar read the whole *Muwāfaqāt Zaynab* with Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Ba‘lī al-Ḥanbalī,⁶ Khadijah bint Abī Bakr al-Kūrī,⁷ ‘Alī ibn Ghāzī ibn ‘Alī al-Ṣāliḥī al-Kūrī,⁸ ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Bālīsī,⁹ Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Simsār,¹⁰ and parts of it with ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Urmawī¹¹ and ‘Umar ibn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī.¹²

Mashyakhah Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisiyyah. Ḥāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated this *Mashyakhah* of Fāṭimah bint Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abdillāh ibn al-Shaykh Abī ‘Umar al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 747) with his *sanad* to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar, who narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Urmawī, who narrated it from Fāṭimah herself.¹³

Mashyakhah Zaynab bint al-Khabbāz. Ibn Ḥajar narrated this *Mashyakhah* of Umm ‘Abdillāh Zaynab bint Najm al-Dīn Ismā‘īl ibn Ibrāhīm al-Khabbāz (d.749) from his shaykh ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Uthmān al-Karkī, who heard it from Zaynab.¹⁴ ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated it with his *sanad* to Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar.¹⁵

¹ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 653. ² IBN HAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, ii. 347. ³ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 644. ⁴ *Ibid.*, ii. 460. ⁵ IBN HAJAR, *al-Majma‘ al-mu‘assas*, i. 237. ⁶ *Ibid.*, i. 566. ⁷ *Ibid.*, i. 588. ⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 270. ⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 347. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ii. 544. ¹¹ *Ibid.*, ii. 232. ¹² *Ibid.*, ii. 322. ¹³ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 654. ¹⁴ IBN HAJAR, *al-Mu‘jam al-mufḥharas*, 208. ¹⁵ See AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 654.

Mu'jam Maryam al-Nābulsiyyah. Hāfiz Ibn Hajar compiled this *Mu'jam* of Amatullāh Maryam bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad al-Nābulsiyyah (d. 758). Hājir bint al-Sharaf al-Maqdisi narrated it from Abū l-Ma'ālī 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar al-Ḥallāwī, who narrated it from Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Ghālī al-Dimyātī, who heard it from Maryam herself. An incomplete version (ed. Majdī al-Sayyid Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Maktabah al-Qur'ān, n. d., about 80 pp.) has only one *juḡ*² out of the 24 *ajḡā*³ of her *musnad*. The editor, regrettably, gives no information about the other parts.

Mu'jam Maryam al-Adhra'īyyah. This *Mu'jam* of Maryam bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Adhra'īyyah (d. 805) was compiled by Hāfiz Ibn Hajar in one volume.¹

Mashyakhab Hasanah al-Ṭabariyyah. Hāfiz 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated this *Mashyakhab* of Ḥasnah bint Abī l-Yumn Muḥammad ibn al-Shihāb Aḥmad al-Ṭabarī al-Makkiyyah (d. 808) with his *sanad* to Hāfiz Ibn Hajar, who narrated it from her.²

Mashyakhab 'A'ishah bint Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī. 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī has mentioned this *Mashyakhab*³, and narrated it with his *isnāds* to Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī and al-Kamāl ibn Ḥamzah, all of them from Taqī al-Dīn ibn Fahd, al-Kamāl Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Zayn, both directly from her.⁴

Mashyakhab Fāṭimah bint Khalīl. This is the *Mashyakhab* of Umm al-Ḥasan Fāṭimah bint Khalīl ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Kinānī (d. 838). Hāfiz Ibn Hajar compiled it and joined with the *mashyakhab* of another of his teachers and called it *al-Mashyakhab al-Bāsimah li-l-Qibābī wa Fāṭimah*. This *Mashyakhab* is mentioned by Hāfiz al-Sakhāwī,⁵ al-Najm ibn Fahd⁶ and others. Hāfiz 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī has narrated it with *isnād* to Ibn Hajar, and mentioned that he has a manuscript of half of it, which is a copy of a version corrected by Hāfiz al-Sakhāwī.⁷ Dār al-Farfūr in Damascus published it in 1422 [2002] edited by Dr. Muḥammad Muṭī' al-Ḥāfiz from a single copy available in the library of Berlin. That copy, written in Cairo in 865, is in the hand of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Qāḍir al-Nābulṣī, a student of Hāfiz Ibn Hajar. In it there are altogether 166

¹ IBN HAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, 88. ² AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihriṣ al-fahāriṣ*, ii. 655. ³ *Ibid.*, 653. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 864. ⁵ AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 91. ⁶ IBN FAHD, *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh*, 406. ⁷ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihriṣ al-fahāriṣ*, ii. 635–36.

shaykhs mentioned. Among them 52 are common to both Qibābī and Fāṭimah, 84 Qibābī's alone and 30 Fāṭimah's alone; so all Shaykhs of al-Qibābī are 136 and all Shaykhs of Fāṭimah are 82.¹

Mashyakhab 'Ā'ishah bint al-'Alā' al-Ḥanbalī. This is the *Mashyakhab* of 'Ā'ishah bint al-'Alā' 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥanbalī (d. 840). Zayn al-Dīn Riḍwān compiled a *juḡ*, starting with *al-Musalsal bi-l-awwaliyyah*, of her higher ḥadīths in which the number of narrators between herself and the Prophet is nine or ten.² Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd says: 'Shaykh Riḍwān compiled forty of her ḥadīths which she narrated.'³

Mashyakhab Zaynab bint al-Yāfi'ī. This *Mashyakhab* of Zaynab bint 'Abdillāh ibn As'ad al-Yāfi'ī (d. 846) was compiled by Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd. Al-Kattānī referred to it by the title *al-Fawā'id al-Hāshimīyyah*, and narrated it through his *isnād* to Ibn Tūlūn, who narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Abī l-Ṣidq, who narrated it from her.⁴ Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd also compiled her higher ḥadīths under the explanatory title, *Aḥādīth tusā'īyyāt al-isnād wa 'ushāriyyāt al-isnād*.⁵ Al-Kattānī has narrated it with his *isnād* to Abū l-Baqā Muḥammad ibn al-Imād al-'Umarī, who narrated it from Ibn Fahd, who narrated it from Zaynab herself.⁶

Mashyakhab Asmā' al-Mahrāniyyah. This is the *Mashyakhab* of Asmā' bint 'Abdillāh ibn Muḥammad al-Mahrāniyyah al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 867). It was compiled by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Khalīl al-Labūdī al-Dimashqī.⁷ Najm al-Dīn ibn Fahd has mentioned the work by a different title, *al-Faṭḥ al-asmā al-rabbānī fī Mashyakhab Asmā' bint al-Mahrānī*.⁸ Ḥāfiẓ 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī narrated it with his *sanad* to Shams al-Dīn ibn Tūlūn, who narrated it from Yūsuf ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, who narrated from Asmā' herself.⁹

al-Arba'ūn of Umm Kirām Uns bint 'Abd al-Karīm. This is the collection of Umm al-Karīm ibn Aḥmad al-Lakhamī, the wife (d. 867) of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Hajar, compiled by Ḥāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī, who read it to her.¹⁰

¹Ibid. ²AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 78. ³IBN FAHD, *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh* 323. ⁴AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 653. ⁵IBN FAHD, *al-Durr al-kamīn*, 1443. ⁶AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, i. 294. ⁷AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 6. ⁸IBN FAHD, *Mu'jam al-shuyūkh* 397. ⁹See AL-KATTĀNĪ, *al-Mu'jam al-mufḥaras*, ii. 653. ¹⁰AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Jawābir wa-l-durar*, iii. 1211.

Mashyakhab Zāhidah bint al-Zāhirī. This is the *Mashyakhab* of Zāhidah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Zāhirī, compiled by al-Muqātilī.¹ She heard ḥadīth from Ibrāhīm ibn Khalīl, and got *ijāzahs* from Ibn al-Junayzī, al-Shāwī, Ibn al-Ḥubāb and others.

Humaydah's ḥadīth writings. Humaydah bint Muḥammad Sharīf ibn Shams al-Dīn al-Aṣbahāniyyah (d. 1087) became known for her ḥadīth writings: Among those writings are her marginal notes on *al-Istibṣār* of Shaykh al-Ṭūsī: These notes were well received by scholars and they referred to them.² She also compiled a book on the narrators of ḥadīth known by the title *Rijāl Humaydah*.³

Khunāthah's Notes. Khunāthah bint Bakkār ibn ‘Alī al-Ma‘āfirī (d. 1159) wrote marginal notes on *al-Iṣābah fī tamyiz al-ṣaḥābah* of Ibn Hajar.⁴

Mashyakhab al-Sitt Fāṭimah. The full title of this *Mashyakhab* is *al-Fahāris al-qā'imah fī asānīd al-Sitt Fāṭimah*. Shaykh Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fādānī (d. 1410) narrated it from Muḥammad ibn Arshad ibn Sa‘d, who narrated it from Sitt Fāṭimah herself.⁵

HIGHER ISNĀD THROUGH WOMEN TEACHERS

Ḥadīth scholars did not distinguish between men and women teachers as being more or less worthy for being men or women. They paid the same attention to preserving accurately the wording of ḥadīths narrated by women as to those narrated by men. In the later period interest in seeking out women scholars is a part of the effort to get higher *isnāds*. If a woman shaykhah outlived all the men in her generation, she would attract a lot of students, who would come to study with her in order to make their *isnād* higher. Seeking higher *isnād* is a well-established tradition among the people of ḥadīth. Al-Ḥākim cites examples of the Companions travelling for higher *isnāds*, and he calls doing so a *sunnaḥ*.⁵

¹ IBN HAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, ii. 113. ²See AFANDĪ, *Riyāḍ al-‘ulamā’*, v. 404; AL-ḤAKĪMĪ, *‘Aḡyān al-nisā’*, 98; *Rayāḥin al-sharī‘ah*, iv. 185. ³AL-TAHRĀNĪ, *al-Dharī‘ah*, x. 14. ⁴ IBN HAJAR, *al-Iṣābah*, MS. al-Khizānah al-Ḥasaniyyah, no. 5932. MAMDŪḤ, *I‘lām al-Qāṣi wa-l-dānī*, 66. ⁵AL-ḤAKIM, *Ma‘rifah ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 8-9.

An *isnād's* being high is of three kinds. Firstly, assuming the *isnād* is sound (meaning each link is authenticated and the links unbroken), it is a measure of proximity to the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*. All the ḥadīths in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* are *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound). Between al-Bukhārī and the Prophet there are usually five or six people, sometimes more, sometimes fewer. However, there are 22 ḥadīths in the book where there are only three people between al-Bukhārī and the Prophet. These are the highest *isnāds* in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*. One of them is: Makkī ibn Ibrāhīm ⇐ Yazīd ibn Abī 'Ubayd ⇐ Salamah ibn al-Akwa'. In the later centuries, there are many ḥadīths which the scholars narrate through women teachers because doing so shortens the *isnād*. For example, the tenth-century scholar Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī, narrated the Prophetic ḥadīth 'None from those who pledged allegiance under the tree will enter the Fire' through the two *isnāds* below:

Hāfiz Ibn Hajar ⇐ Abū Ishāq al-Tanūkhī ⇐ Abū l-'Abbās al-Ḥajjār ⇐ Abū l-Munajjā ibn al-Lattī ⇐ Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī ⇐ Abū 'Abdillāh al-Fārisī ⇐ Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Shurayḥ ⇐ Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghawī ⇐ Abū l-Jahm al-Bāhili ⇐ Layth ibn Sa'd ⇐ Abū l-Zubayr ⇐ Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh ⇐ the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*

'Ā'ishah bint ibn 'Abd al-Hādī ⇐ Abū l-'Abbās al-Ḥajjār ⇐ Munajjā ibn al-Lattī ⇐ Abū l-Waqt al-Sijzī ⇐ Abū 'Abdillāh al-Fārisī ⇐ Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Shurayḥ ⇐ Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghawī ⇐ Abū l-Jahm al-Bāhili ⇐ Layth ibn Sa'd ⇐ Abū l-Zubayr ⇐ Jābir ibn 'Abdillāh ⇐ the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*

'Ā'ishah bint ibn 'Abd al-Hādī was the last surviving student of al-Ḥajjār; accordingly the *isnād* through her is a degree higher for Abū l-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī than the other.

Secondly, there is highness of *isnād* indicating proximity to one of those accepted by the *ummah* as an imām (one to be followed) in the field. In our time, if scholars narrate the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī through 'Ā'ishah al-Maqdisiyyah (d. 816), then between them and Imām al-Bukhārī there will be one less narrator than through any other *isnād*. Similarly, if scholars narrate a ḥadīth from Imām al-Ṭabarānī through Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 525),

there will be at least one narrator less than through any other *isnād*. Her *isnād* for the ḥadīths of Imām al-Ṭabarānī is the highest in the world.

Thirdly, there is highness of *isnād* for ḥadīths recorded in different compilations, such as the Six Books and other famous works. Thus a particular ḥadīth through Imām al-Bukhārī is not necessarily narrated by him with the highest *isnād* possible. This comparative highness is divided further into sub-kinds, details of which can be found in the standard works of *uṣūl al-ḥadīth*. Here, a single illustrative example must suffice. Ḥāfiẓ Abū l-Faḍl al-ʿIrāqī (d. 805) narrates a ḥadīth with three *isnāds*, one through al-Bukhārī, one through Muslim, and this one:

Sitt al-Arab bint Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqdisī ⇐ Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Bukhārī ⇐ Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṣaydlānī ⇐ *Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah* ⇐ Abū Bakr ibn Rīdhah ⇐ Abū l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī ⇐ Abū Muslim al-Kishshī ⇐ Abū ʿĀṣim ⇐ Yazīd ibn Abī ʿUbayd ⇐ Salamah ibn al-Akwaʿ.

The third one, with the two women narrators in it, is, al-ʿIrāqī says, one degree higher compared to the one through al-Bukhārī, and two degrees higher compared to the one through Muslim.¹

¹ ABŪ L-FADL AL-ʿIRĀQĪ, *K. al-Arbaʿīn al-ʿUshāriyyah*, 149–50.

Chapter 8

Women and ḥadīth critique

In the foregoing I have demonstrated that the *muḥaddithāt* were much sought after for their knowledge and piety. Here I outline some formal aspects of evaluation of women narrators within the discipline of *jarḥ* (invalidating) and *taʿdīl* (validating) the competence of an individuals to transmit reports or testimony. After that, I present what is known with certainty about the women's contribution to ḥadīth critique.

EVALUATION OF NARRATORS

The duty to assay or evaluate narrators is founded primarily on God's command (*al-Ḥujurāt*, 49. 6): *O believers, if an evil-doer (fāsiq) comes to you with news, then verify it (fa-tabayyanū) lest you injure a people in ignorance.* However, in the very same sūrah, God forbids excessive suspiciousness (*kathīran min al-ẓann*) and He describes backbiting (criticizing people behind their backs) in the strongest terms as abhorrent as would be eating a human corpse. (*al-Ḥujurāt*, 49. 12.)

Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, the great scholar among the Successors of the Companions, said: 'The knowledge is religion, so be careful about those from whom you are taking your religion.'¹ Imām al-Nawawī said: '*Jarḥ* and *taʿdīl* are made lawful for the protection of the religion.'² Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has discussed the controversy at some length:

Some people [...] have criticized the commenting by the experts among our imāms and the people of knowledge from our ancestors

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Muqaddimah*. ²AL-NAWAWĪ, *al-Taqrīb* (with commentary *al-Tadrīb*), ii. 298.

that so-and-so narrator is weak, and that so-and-so is not reliable, and whatever is similar to that, and they consider that as backbiting those about whom these comments are made if that fault [really] is found in them, and as slander if that fault is not found in them. Their ḥadīth [that they base this opinion on] is the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was asked: What is backbiting? He said: ‘To mention about your brother what he dislikes. The person asked: What if what I say [really] is in my brother? The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: If what you say is in your brother, then you have backbited him, and if it is not in him, then you have slandered him. What they say is not valid: for the people of knowledge are unanimous that a report should not be accepted except from an intelligent, truthful person who can be trusted in what he says. In that there is evidence of permissibility of *jarḥ* of the one who is not truthful in his narration. Also the *sunnah* of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – has come clearly attesting to what we have stated, and opposing the opinion of these who differ from us.¹

Al-Khaṭīb then cites the ḥadīth of the woman who came to the Messenger to consult him about two men who had proposed marriage to her.

She said: Mu‘āwiyah ibn Abī Sufyān and Abū Jahm have proposed to me. The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – said: As for Abū Jahm, he never takes his stick from his neck, and as for Mu‘āwiyah, he is a poor one and has no wealth. Marry Usāmah ibn Zayd.’ In this ḥadīth there is permissibility of *jarḥ* of the weak for a good cause. [...]

The backbiting that is forbidden is that where one mentions the faults of his brother in order to lower him and to humiliate him.²

From the earliest period, a group of Companions, their Successors and those after them commented on the qualities of the narrators of ḥadīth. Shu‘bah, known as ‘the commander of the faithful’ in ḥadīth, was the first to develop the practice as a distinct discipline. Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān and others got this knowledge from him, and from Yaḥyā, it came to Yaḥyā ibn

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 38. ²*Ibid.*, 39–40.

Maʿīn, ʿAlī ibn al-Madinī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. From them it came to al-Bukhārī, Abū Zurʿah al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī and Muslim, and so on. Abū Bakr ibn Kallād said to Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān: ‘Don’t you fear that these people whose ḥadīth you have left will be claimants against you before God? Yaḥyā said: ‘If they are claimants against me, it is better than the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – being a claimant against me, saying: Why did you not push away lying from my ḥadīth?’¹

On balance, the need to prevent inaccuracies and fabrications from entering knowledge of the *Sunnah* prevailed over the unwillingness to say about someone what could hurt their feelings or their reputation. It suffices for our purpose here to summarize Ibn Ḥajar’s classification of narrators into twelve ‘grades’ – six positive, six negative – which has been widely accepted by the community:

- I. The Companions, who are accepted as narrators on the authority of the Qurʾān’s praising their quality as believers.
- II. The narrators who have been consistently described as *awṭhaq al-nās* term ‘the most reliable of people’ or *thiqah thiqah* ‘reliable reliable’ or with terms meaning ‘reliable’ and ‘expert’ (*ḥāfiẓ*).
- III. The narrators who have been described at least once with words of high praise like *thiqah* or *mutqin* (‘accurate’) or *thabt* (‘firm’) or *ʿadl* (‘just’).
- IV. The narrators whose quality has been indicated by saying of them, *ṣādiq* (‘very truthful’) or *lā baʿsa bi-hi* (‘no harm in [taking from] him’).
- V. The narrators whose quality is marginally less than IV, described as *ṣadūq sayyiʾ* *l-ḥifẓ* (‘very truthful with sound memory’).
- VI. The narrators who narrate few ḥadīths, and no reason is known for turning away from those ḥadīths, and are described as *maqbul* (‘accepted’).
- VII. The narrators from whom more than one person has narrated, but whose reliability is not explicitly confirmed, described as *mastūr* (‘hidden’), or *majhūl al-ḥāl* (‘whose condition is unknown’).

¹ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *Tadrīb al-rāwī*, ii. 299.

- VIII. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed by one whose affirmation matters, and who have pointed to as *da'īf* ('weak').
- IX. The narrators from whom only one person has narrated, and whose reliability has not been affirmed at all; described as *majhūl* ('unknown').
- X. The narrators whose reliability is not affirmed at all, and about whom something negative is known; described as *matrūk* ('left') or *sāqit* ('fallen') or *wāhī al-ḥadīth* ('weak in ḥadīth').
- XI. Narrators who have been accused of lying.
- XII. Narrators about whom lying or fabricating is established, either by their confession or otherwise (*mutaḥabbil kaḍhib*).¹

Ta'dīl of women narrators

The expert assayers of ḥadīth have placed women narrators in all six positive grades, starting with the highest degree of reliability, namely the Companions, among them the wives and daughters of the Prophet. Several women are among those of the next rank (II), for example the great jurist *tābi'īyyah* 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān. About her, al-Dhahabī said: 'She was a scholar, jurist, proof, and holder of abundance of knowledge';² Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn said: 'reliable and proof'.³ Another example is 'Ā'ishah bint Ṭalḥah, about whom Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn said: 'reliable and proof'.⁴ And there are many others of this rank from the early and the later generations.

Among many women narrators ranked III by most experts is Ḥafṣah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Al-ʿIjlī (d. 261) said about her: 'a reliable *tābi'īyyah*';⁵ about Fāṭimah bint al-Mundhir, he said: 'a reliable *tābi'īyyah* from Madinah';⁶ about Ṣafīyyah bint Abī 'Ubayd al-Thaqafīyyah, he said: 'a reliable jurist of Madinah';⁷ about both Dīqrah bint Ghālib al-Baṣriyyah⁸ and Qamīr bint 'Amr al-Kūfiyyah,⁹ he said: 'reliable *tābi'īyyah*'.

¹IBN HAJAR, *Taqrīb al-taḥdhīb, Muqaddimah*. ²AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a'ālām al-nubalā'*, iv. 508. ³AL-MIZZĪ, *Taḥdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 152. ⁴IBN 'ASĀKIR, *Ta'rīkh Madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā'*, 210. ⁵AL-ʿIJLĪ, *Ta'rīkh al-thiqāt*, 523. ⁶*Ibid.*, 523. ⁷*Ibid.*, 520. ⁸*Ibid.*, 519. ⁹*Ibid.*, 524.

Among those women narrators ranked by most experts as IV, V, and VI are: ‘Umaynah bint Anas ibn Mālīk,¹ Ḥabībah bint Maysarah ibn Abī Khuthaym,² Ḥasnah bint Mu‘āwiyah ibn Sulaymān al-Ṣarīmīyah,³ Khayrah, the mother of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī,⁴ and many others.

Jarḥ of women narrators

Grades VII–XII are grades of negative valuation or *jarḥ*. The least of those (VII) includes those whose quality as narrators is not known. Among the examples of this rank is Bahīyyah, the *mawlāh* of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq. Her ḥadīth is in *Sunan* of Abū Dāwūd;⁵ Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar said: ‘She is not known.’⁶

Some women have been put in the VIIIth category by mistake and the mistake later rectified. An example is ‘Ā’ishah bint Sa‘d ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. Al-Khaṭīb narrates from Mālīk: ‘I asked her about some ḥadīths; then I did not like to take anything from her because of her weakness.’⁷ According to the ḥadīth experts, this narration from Mālīk must be wrong because Mālīk has himself narrated from her – in his *Muwattā*, as Ḥāfiẓ Abū Zur‘ah al-‘Irāqī pointed out. Ibn Ḥibbān has confirmed her reliability and al-Bukhārī has narrated her ḥadīth.⁸ Al-‘Ijlī says about her: ‘She is a reliable *tābi‘īyyah*.’⁹ Al-Ṣafādī said: ‘She is among the reliable ones.’¹⁰

Among the women narrators at the rank indicated by the epithet ‘unknown’ (IX), is Unaysah. Ṣafwān ibn Sulaymān narrated from her and she narrated from Umm Sa‘id bint Murrah al-Fihri. Al-Bukhārī has quoted her ḥadīth in *al-Adab al-mufrad*. Ibn Ḥajar said about her: ‘She is not known.’¹¹ Bunānah bint Yazīd al-‘Abshamiyyah who narrated from ‘Ā’ishah and ‘Āṣim al-Aḥwal narrated from her. Ḥāfiẓ says about her: ‘She is not

¹ IBN ḤAJAR, *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, 743. ² *Ibid.*, 745. ³ *Ibid.* ⁴ *Ibid.*, 746. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Tajrīd asmā’ al-ṣaḥābah*, ii. 266. ⁶ IBN ḤAJAR, *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, 744. ⁷ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 132–3. ⁸ Abū Zur‘ah AL-‘IRĀQĪ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tawḍīḥ*, 329. ⁹ AL-‘IJLĪ, *Ta’rīk al-thiqāt*, 521. ¹⁰ AL-ṢAFĀDĪ, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, xvi. 606. ¹¹ IBN ḤAJAR, *Taqrīb al-tahdhīb*, 744.

known.¹ Again, some were put in this category wrongly, and the mistake corrected by later scholars. An example is al-ʿĀliyah bint Ayfaʿ, the wife of Abū Ishāq al-Ṣabīʿī and the mother of Yūnus ibn Abī Ishāq. About her, al-Dāraquṭnī said: 'She is obscure';² Ibn Ḥazm said: 'Nobody knows who she is';³ Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr said: 'She is obscure.'⁴ However, Ibn Ḥibbān named her among the 'reliable' *tābiʿiyyāt*.⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī said: 'They say: al-ʿĀliyah is an obscure woman, so her report cannot be accepted. We say: rather, she is a woman of great position, well-known.'⁶ Ibn al-Turkmānī (d. 750) says: 'al-ʿĀliyah is well-known, her husband and her son have both narrated from her and both are expert in ḥadīth. Her ḥadīth is accepted by al-Thawrī, al-Awzāʿī, Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.'⁷

An example of the rank of those narrators whose ḥadīths are 'left' (X) is Ḥakkāmah bint ʿUthmān ibn Dīnār. Ibn Ḥibbān, al-ʿUqaylī, and al-Dhahabī have criticized her ḥadīth.⁸

As for the two lowest ranks (XI, XII), of narrators accused of fabricating ḥadīth, or whose fabrication is known, there is not a single woman among them. Al-Dhahabī says: 'I did not know among the women anyone who has been accused [of lying] or whose ḥadīth has been left [for that]'.⁹

EVALUATION OF WOMEN'S HADĪTHS

Women's ḥadīths are described by the experts according to the same categories as men's, as *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound), *ḥasan* (good) and *ḍaʿīf* (weak), although they are preferred over the men's in that women are not known to have narrated any fabricated ḥadīths.

There are a great number of ḥadīths narrated by women alone; the traditionists have accepted them and jurists have acted upon them. Examples were given earlier. Here is another

¹ *Ibid.*, 744. ² AL-DĀRAQUṬNĪ, *Sunan*, iii. 51. ³ IBN ḤAZM, *al-Muḥallā*, i. 240.

⁴ IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, *al-Tamhīd*, xviii. 20. ⁵ IBN ḤIBBĀN, *K. al-Thiqāt*, v. 289.

⁶ IBN JAWZĪ *al-Taḥqīq*, ii. 184. IBN AL-TURKMĀNĪ, *al-Jawhar al-naqī*, v. 330.

⁸ AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Mughnī fī al-ḍuʿafāʾ*, ii. 425. ⁹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Mīzan al-ʿitdāl*, vii. 465.

example: al-Ḥākim narrated from ‘Ā’ishah that ‘the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – called on her and she had a curtain [hanging] which had some pictures [on it]. The colour of his face changed. Then he took the curtain and tore it with his hand and then said: The worst people being punished on the Day of Resurrection are those who copy the creation of God.’ Al-Ḥākim said: ‘This is a *ṣaḥīḥ sunnah*.’¹

The experts have, in many cases, preferred ḥadīths narrated by women over those narrated by men, because the former have stronger *isnāds* and are further from containing mistakes. Al-Ḥākim narrated from Anas ibn Mālīk ‘that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was riding a horse, fell from it and his right side was injured. Then he led one of the prayers while sitting and we also prayed behind him sitting. After he finished the prayer, he said: The imām is made to be followed; when he prays standing then pray standing, when he bows, then bow, and when he rises then rise [...] and when he prays sitting then pray together sitting.’² However, ‘Ā’ishah narrated that the Messenger of God in his last illness prayed sitting and Abū Bakr followed him standing. Al-Ḥākim confirms that the ḥadīth experts have preferred ‘Ā’ishah’s narration over that of Anas because ‘Ā’ishah’s has the support of other narrators.³

Scholars traced some discrepancies or contradictions found with some narrations by women not to the women who originally narrated them but to later narrators. There are many examples of that; here is one:

Wahb ibn Jarīr narrated from Shu‘bah, from al-Ḥakam, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad, from ‘Ā’ishah that she said: ‘When the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – was in [a state of] major ritual impurity, and he had to eat or sleep, he would do ablution (*wuḍū’*).’⁴ This ḥadīth is opposed by another ḥadīth narrated by Abū ‘Āṣim from Sufyān al-Thawrī, from Abū Ishāq, from al-Aswad, from ‘Ā’ishah that she said: ‘The

¹ AL-ḤĀKIM, *Ma‘rifah ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 160. ² *Ibid.*, 156. ³ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – would sleep while in [a state of] major impurity without touching any water.’ Al-Hākim says after looking through different *isnāds* for these ḥadīths: ‘All these *isnāds* are sound, and the two reports oppose each other. The reports of the people of Madinah and Kufah agree on ablution, and the reports through Abū Ishāq oppose them.’¹ So this mistake in ‘Ā’ishah’s ḥadīth is not from her: rather it is from some later narrators.

EVALUATION OF NARRATORS BY WOMEN

Women also made their contribution to the evaluation of ḥadīths and critique of narrators. What has been narrated from them in this regard is little, but it is significant that the experts of ḥadīth and *fiqh* have accepted it as valid. Before giving some examples, I will discuss the lawfulness of women doing *ta‘dīl* and *jarḥ*.

Women’s role in ta‘dīl and jarḥ

Most scholars hold that *ta‘dīl* and *jarḥ* by women is permissible. The reasoning of those opposed to this view is that women do not have enough information about people to pass judgement. However, this argument is useless, for if there not enough information to base *ta‘dīl* and *jarḥ* on, then it is disallowed anyway, whether done by a man or woman. Imām al-Ghazālī affirms in *al-Mustasfā* the permissibility of women’s *ta‘dīl* and *jarḥ*, and he compares it with their narration of ḥadīth. Imām al-Nawawī also affirms it.² Qāḍī Abū ‘Alī al-Walīd al-Bājī (d. 474) says that ‘*tajrīḥ* and *ta‘dīl* of narrators of ḥadīth by women is valid.’³ The people of ḥadīth argue for this from the incident of the slander against ‘Ā’ishah when the Prophet called on the maidservant Barīrah to inform him about her and took account of what she told him. Qāḍī Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib says: ‘If it is

¹ *Ibid.*, 156. ² AL-NAWAWĪ, *al-Taqrīb* with its commentary *al-Tadrīb*, i. 321. ³ Abū l-Walīd AL-BĀJĪ, *Iḥkām al-fuṣūl fī aḥkām al-uṣūl*, i. 376.

said: Do you hold it obligatory to accept *taʿdīl* by the woman who knows what *taʿdīl* and *jarḥ* mean? The answer is: Yes. There is nothing that prevents from accepting that, neither any consensus nor anything else. Had there been any text or consensus then we would not have allowed it [...].¹ Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says: ‘When it is affirmed that the report of the righteous woman is accepted, and that is the consensus of the early generation, then it is also obligatory that the *taʿdīl* of the narrators by women should be accepted, so the *tazkiyah* by women, which means reporting the quality of the reporter and witness, will be – as regards necessitating action upon it – the same as the report by women.’²

Examples of taʿdīl and jarḥ by women

ʿAmrah bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān narrates that it was reported to ʿĀʾishah that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar says: ‘The deceased person is punished for the wailing of the living over him.’ ʿĀʾishah said: ‘May God forgive Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [the *kunyah* of ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar]; he did not lie but he forgot or made a mistake. The true story is that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – passed by a deceased Jewish woman and said: They are wailing over her and she is being punished in her grave.’³ It is clear that ʿĀʾishah has in this instance questioned Ibn ʿUmar’s preserving of knowledge (*dabt*).

Another example of that is when it was reported to ʿĀʾishah that Abū Hurayrah said: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: *Shuʾm* [ill-omen] is in three things, in the house, the woman and the horse.’ ʿĀʾishah said: ‘Abū Hurayrah did not preserve [the whole of the matter]. He entered while the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – was saying: May God fight the Jews [for] they say there is *shuʾm* in

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Kifāyah*, 98. ² *Ibid.* ³ AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Janāʾiz*, bāb *qawl al-nabī ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam yuʿadhdhabu al-mayyit bi baʿd bukāʾ ahli-hi ʿalay-hi*; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Janāʾiz*, bāb *al-mayyit yaʿadhdhabu bi bukāʾ ahli-hi ʿalay-hi*.

three things, the house, the woman, and the horse. Abū Hurayrah heard the end of the ḥadīth and did not hear the beginning of the ḥadīth.¹

Yaʿlā al-Taymī narrated: 'I entered Makkah three days after ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Zubayr was killed, while his body was hanging on the cross. His mother came. She was a tall, blind lady. She said to Ḥajjāj [wanting her son's body taken down]: Has the time not come for this rider to dismount? He said: The hypocrite? She said: By God, he was not a hypocrite. Rather he was a *ṣawwām* [one who fasts much], a *qawwām* [one who stands much in prayer, and] an obedient [one]. He said: Go back, old woman! You have lost sense because of old age. She said: No, by God, I have not lost my sense. For I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: In the tribe of Thaḳīf there will be a liar and a destroyer. As for the liar, we have seen him – she meant Mukhtār – and as for the destroyer, that is you.'²

Ibn ʿAmmār narrated that Wākī^c was asked about Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyyah. He said: 'She was a woman with an intelligent heart.' And Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd was asked about her; he said: 'A man asked her about Shurayḥ. She said: He was like your mother.'³ In this report, Yaḥyā ibn Saʿīd, one of the imāms of *jarḥ* is quoting Umm Dāwūd al-Wābishiyyah about a narrator (Shurayḥ). Shuʿbah narrates that his mother asked Hishām ibn Ḥassān: 'Who does Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn narrate from? He said: From Abū Hurayrah and Ibn ʿUmar. Then she said: Ibn Sīrīn did hear ḥadīth from them.'⁴

WOMEN'S ROLE IN ḤADĪTH CRITIQUE

The methodology of ḥadīth critique reached full development in the second–third century. Most of its principles relate to the

¹Abū Dāwūd AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ, *al-Musnad*, as cited in AL-ZARKASHĪ, *al-Ijābah*, 59. ²AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, ii. 294. ³AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, i. 133. ⁴BAḤSHAL, *Taʾrīkh Wāsiṭ*, 109.

critical study of *isnāds*, a sophisticated and difficult discipline entailing cross-checking the narrators in order to verify who met and studied what with whom, when and where. A part of that effort of critique was concerned with verifying the actual text of the ḥadīth, alongside the labour of deriving instruction or guidance from it. Among the Companions, ‘Ā’ishah is a famous practitioner of this art. While no formal or systematic statement of key principles of critique is attributed to ‘Ā’ishah, it is quite clear that those principles derive from her exemplary practice. Six are illustrated below:

Checking the ḥadīth against the Qur’ān

‘Ā’ishah consistently applied the principle, later formulated and agreed upon by all jurists and traditionist, that if a ḥadīth is contradicted by a Qur’ānic verse, and there is no way of reconciling them, then the ḥadīth will be ‘left’. For example, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās used to say: ‘The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – saw [i.e. actually set eyes on] his Lord twice.’ Masrūq says that he asked ‘Ā’ishah:

O *umm al-mu’minīn*, did Muḥammad see his Lord?

She said: What you have said has made my hair stand on end for fear! Where are you from [i.e. where is your grasp of] three things! Whoever tells you that, he is a liar. Whoever tells [you] that Muḥammad saw his Lord, he is a liar. Then she recited [*al-An‘ām*, 6. 104]: *No seeing [faculties] can encompass Him, and He encompasses all seeing [faculties]*. And [*al-Shūrā*, 42. 51]: *It is not for any human that God should speak to him unless by revelation or from behind a veil*. Whoever tells you that he knew what is in [store for] tomorrow, he has lied. Then she recited [*Luqmān*, 31. 34]: *No soul knows what it will earn tomorrow*. And whoever tells you that he concealed something, he has lied. Then she recited [*al-Mā’idah*, 5. 67]: *O Messenger, proclaim that which has been sent down to you from your Lord*. Rather, he saw [the angel of the Revelation] Jibrīl in his form twice.¹

‘Urwah ibn al-Zubayr narrated from ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar that he said: ‘The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – stood

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tafsīr*, bāb *tafsīr sūrat al-Najm*.

up on the *qalib* of Badr [the ditch in which the unbelievers were buried] and said [to the dead]: Have you found there what your Lord had promised? Then he said: They are hearing what I am saying to them.' When this ḥadīth was mentioned to 'Ā'ishah, she said: 'Rather, the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – said: They know that what I am saying is true. Then she recited [*al-Naml*, 27. 80]: *Indeed you cannot make the dead hear.*¹

Checking the ḥadīth against another, stronger ḥadīth

Another key principle derived from the practice of 'Ā'ishah is that if a ḥadīth goes against one stronger and more firmly established than it, then the weaker ḥadīth will be 'left', not acted upon. 'Ubayd ibn Rifā'ah al-Anṣārī says:

We were in an assembly where Zayd ibn Thābit also was. Then [the people there] discussed the bath after [sexual] emission. [Zayd ibn Thābit] said: If someone has intercourse and did not ejaculate, he has only to wash his private parts and do ablution like the ablution for the prayer. Somebody from that assembly stood up and came to 'Umar and told him that. 'Umar said to the man: Go yourself and bring him to me, so that you can be witness against him. The man went and brought him. There with 'Umar were sitting some Companions of the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – among them, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and Mu'adh ibn Jabal. 'Umar said to Zayd [ibn Thābit]: O enemy of yourself, do you give a fatwa like that? Zayd said: By God, I have not invented it. Rather, I have heard it from my uncles like Rifā'ah ibn Rāfi' and Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī. Then 'Umar asked those Companions who were there with him and said to them: What do you say? They differed. 'Umar said: O slaves of God, you differ, while you are the elect of those who took part in [the battle of] Badr! Then 'Alī said to him: Send someone to the wives of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – for they will be aware of there being something like that. 'Umar sent to Ḥafṣah and asked her. She said: I have no knowledge of that. They sent someone to 'Ā'ishah. She said: When the circumcised part has passed the other circumcised part, then the bath is obligatory. Then 'Umar said: If I [come to] know

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Maghāzī, bāb qat'l Abī Jahl*.

anyone doing that and [after so doing] he does not have a bath, I will give him a lesson.’¹

Checking the ḥadīth against a sunnah of the Prophet

Sālim narrates from his father ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar that he said: I heard ‘Umar say: ‘When [in the ḥajj] you have done the stoning [and sacrificed] and shaved, then everything becomes permissible for you except women and perfume.’ Sālim continues: ‘Ā’ishah said: Everything except women. I put perfume on the Messenger on that occasion’. Then Sālim comments: ‘The *sunnah* of God’s Messenger – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – is more worthy to be followed.’²

Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān said: ‘I heard Abū Hurayrah giving a sermon and he said in his sermon: Whoever has got up at the time of dawn in the state of major impurity, then he should not fast. I [Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān] mentioned that to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥārith, who mentioned it to his father; he did not accept it. Then I and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān went and called upon ‘Ā’ishah and Umm Salamah and we asked about that. ‘Ā’ishah said the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – used to get up in the morning in the state of major impurity and he used to fast.’³

Qāsim ibn Muḥammad narrates that ‘Ā’ishah was informed that Abū Hurayrah was saying: ‘The passing of a woman in front of person praying invalidates the prayer.’ She said: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – would pray, and my leg would be in front of him, then he would turn it away and I would draw it back.’⁴

¹ AL-TAḤĀWĪ, *Sharḥ Maṣanī al-āthār*, i. 58. ² AL-BAYHAQĪ, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, Ḥajj, bāb mā yaḥillu bi-l-taḥallul al-awwal min maḥẓūrāt al-iḥrām.

³ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣawm*, bāb al-ṣā’im yuṣbi-hu junūban; MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ṣiyyām*, bāb ṣiḥḥat sawm man ṭala’a ‘alay-hi al-fajri wa huwa junūb.

⁴ ABŪ MANṢŪR AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Istidrāk umm al-mu’minīn*, 99.

Checking the ḥadīth in the light of its occasion (sabab)

ʿUrwah ibn al-Zubayr narrates that it came to the knowledge of ʿĀʾishah that Abū Hurayrah was saying: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: Being content with a whip in the path of God, is better to me than freeing an illegitimate child. And that the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: The illegitimate child is the worst of the three [father, mother, child]; and the dead person is punished for the wailing of the living.’ ʿĀʾishah said:

God have mercy on Abū Hurayrah, he did not listen properly, so he did not answer properly. As for his saying, ‘Being content with a whip in the path of God is better to me than freeing an illegitimate child’: Now, when the verse [*al-Balad*, 90. 11–13] was revealed *But he has not attempted the steep ascent. And what will make you know what the steep ascent is? It is the freeing of a neck [from the yoke of slavery]*, it was said to him: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam*. We do not have anything to free, unless it be that some of us have slave-girls who serve us and work for us [and] we could ask them to do adultery and then have some children whom we could free. Then the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam*: Being content with a whip in the path of God is better to me than commanding adultery and then freeing an illegitimate child. [Then] as for his saying that ‘an illegitimate child is worst of the three’, the ḥadīth was not like that. A hypocrite used to cause hurt to the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – so he said: Who will defend me from him? Someone said: O Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – besides that [he does as you say] he is an illegitimate one. Then he said: He is the worst of the three, and God says [*al-Anʿām*, 6. 164]: *And no bearer of burden bears the burden of another*. [Then] as for his saying that the deceased is punished for the wailing of the living, so the ḥadīth is not like that. Rather, the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – passed by a Jew who had died and the people of his family were wailing over him. Then he said: They are crying over him and he is being punished. God says [*al-Baqarah*, 2. 286]: *God does not burden a self beyond its capacity*.¹

¹ AL-ḤĀKIM, *al-Mustadrak*, ii. 234.

Checking a ḥadīth against the difficulty of acting upon it

ʿUbayd ibn ʿUmayr narrates that it came to the knowledge of ʿĀʾishah that ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr was commanding women, when they bathed, to unravel their plaits. She said: 'Alas! why does he not command them to shave their heads!'¹

Yahyā ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥāṭib narrates from Abū Hurayrah that he said: 'Whoever washes a deceased, he should bathe, and whoever carries [the body] should do ablution.' When it came to the knowledge of ʿĀʾishah, she said: 'Are the dead Muslims impure? What harm is there in carrying wood?'

Checking a ḥadīth for misconstruction of its meaning

Abū Salamah narrates that when death approached Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, he called for new clothes and put them on. In doing so he was acting on what he remembered the Prophet as saying: 'I heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: The dead person will be raised in those clothes in which he dies.' When this came to the attention of ʿĀʾishah, she criticized it and said: 'God have mercy on Abū Saʿīd! The Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – meant the [garment of] actions on which a man dies. For the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: People will be resurrected, barefoot, naked, uncircumcised.'²

¹MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Ḥayā*, bāb *ḥukm ḍafāʾir al-muḡhtasilah*; IBN MĀJAH, *Sunan*, *Ṭabārah*, bāb *mā jāʾa fī ḡhusl al-nisāʾ min al-janābah*. ²ABŪ DĀWŪD, *Sunan*, *Janāʾiz*, bāb *yustahabbu min taṭhīr thiyyāb al-mayyit ʿinda l-mawt*; AL-ZARKASHĪ, *al-Ijābah*, 71.

Chapter 9

Overview by period and region

At no time in Islamic history including the present, and in no part of the Islamic world, past or present, has study of ḥadīth been considered among Muslims themselves as either redundant or obsolete. To the contrary, the relevance and utility of ḥadīth for teaching the believers how to embody the guidance of Islam in their transactions with God and with each other have always been securely fixed at the deepest level of their commitment as believers. That said, active engagement in the study and teaching of ḥadīth has varied in scope and volume in different times and places. In particular, the numbers of women engaged in the receiving and diffusing of ḥadīth, though not localized to a particular period or region, has varied markedly – at least if judged by the material that I have compiled on the *muḥaddithāt*. Interestingly, the change by period and region in the numbers of men engaged in ḥadīth study does mostly, but does not always, correspond to the change in the numbers of women.

Variation in the quality or level of attention that a particular body of knowledge receives is normal; to some degree it can be observed in all branches of knowledge, all arts and crafts and patterns of industry and commerce, and in every civilization. It is a function of how, in a particular setting, interest in a body of knowledge is motivated, how costs and rewards for engaging with it are perceived, where it fits within broader conceptions of the purposes that education is supposed to serve in the community providing it. I try in this chapter to give a sense of the general outline of when and where ḥadīth study and teaching among the women intensified, declined, revived. The outline is what the material, in gross qualitative terms, suggests to me at this very early stage of studying the material. I offer only very

tentative explanations for the bigger shifts recorded. It will not be possible to offer more secure explanations until the biographical accounts and mentions of women scholars and students can be analysed systematically, and then set alongside relevant information about the socio-economic and legal and political conditions in which the work with ḥadīth was done.

The divisions by region are self-explanatory. As for time periods, the material seems to me to fall into four main phases:

1st–2nd c. AH. In this period women narrators of ḥadīth are both many and conspicuous. The ḥadīths of women Companions and Successors are widely circulated, and recorded in the precursors of the Six Books and other major collections.

2nd–5th c. AH. This is a relatively weak period for women narrators but a peak period for men scholars and students of ḥadīth. The Six Books and major specialist studies are written at this time. The third century is the weakest for women scholars, their numbers recovering gradually through the fourth and fifth centuries.

6th–9th c. AH. After the time of the women Companions, this is the brightest period in the history of the *muḥaddithāt*. From the sixth century, their numbers grow rapidly, peaking in the eighth, beginning to go down in the ninth.

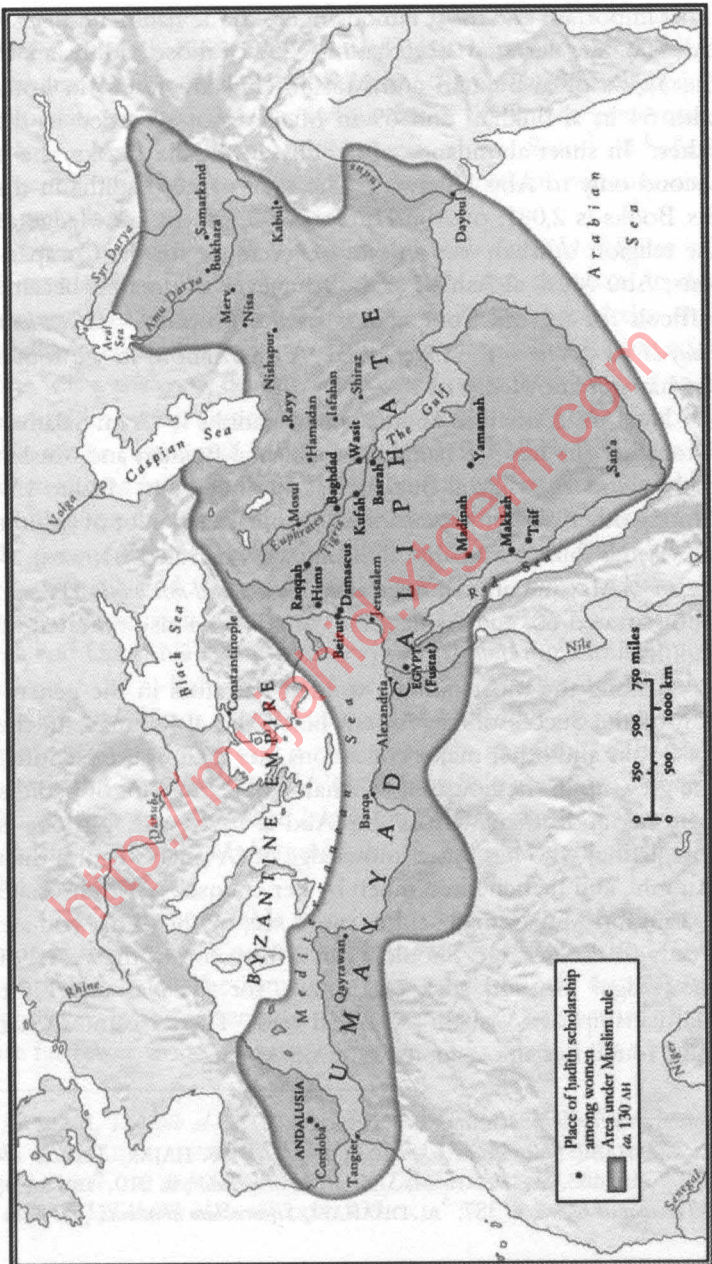
10th–15th c. AH. The period of clear scholarly decline among Muslims in all Islamic sciences including ḥadīth. The decline is not particular to women; it includes men too.

FIRST PERIOD: 1st–2nd c. AH

This is considered the best, the normative, period of Islam. It is the period of the Companions – men and women who learnt the religion from the Prophet himself – of their Successors, many of whom accompanied the Companions in long years of apprenticeship; and of those who followed the Successors and who, by the end of this period, had formalized the practice of their teachers into a strict and solid scholarly discipline.

The ḥadīths of the women of this period are recorded in the major compilations of ḥadīth. Among the Companions, the

Map 2. Islamic world. Spread of *muḥaddithāt* 1st–2nd c.



most important and most famous figure in the ḥadīth and *fiqh* is ‘Ā’ishah. She narrated 2,210 ḥadīths. 297 of those ḥadīths are in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim; 174 are found in both, with 54 in al-Bukhārī and 69 in Muslim not recorded in the other.¹ In sheer abundance of ḥadīths, in the Six Books, she is second only to Abū Hurayrah. The total of her ḥadīths in the Six Books is 2,081, of Abū Hurayrah’s 3,370. In knowledge of the religion ‘Ā’ishah was a point of reference for the Companions; Abū Mūsā al-Ash‘arī said: ‘Whenever any matter became difficult for us, the Companions of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – then we asked ‘Ā’ishah about it: we found she had got knowledge of that.’²

Next to ‘Ā’ishah in abundance of ḥadīths is Umm Salamah. Altogether she has 378 ḥadīths, of which al-Bukhārī and Muslim both record 13, while al-Bukhārī has another 3 and Muslim 13.³ Among other women Companions who narrated a lot of ḥadīths are: Aṣmā’ bint Yazīd ibn al-Sakan who narrated 81; *umm al-mu’minīn* Maymūnah, who narrated 76; *umm al-mu’minīn* Ḥafṣah, who narrated 60; and Aṣmā’ bint Umays, who also narrated 60 ḥadīths.

Among the most famous women narrators in the generation of the Successors is ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān. In the Six Books and other major collections, her ḥadīths are plentiful. She grew up in the house of ‘Ā’ishah and learnt a lot of ḥadīths from her and others. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz said: ‘No one is now [living] who has more knowledge of ‘Ā’ishah’s ḥadīth than ‘Amrah’, and he benefited much by her counsel.⁴ Al-Zuhri said: ‘Qāsim ibn Muḥammad said to me: I see, my boy, that you are greedy for knowledge. Should I not inform you of the vessel of knowledge? Go and stick to ‘Amrah, for she was under the guardianship of ‘Ā’ishah.’ Al-Zuhri said: ‘Then I came to her and I found her an ocean; its water never goes.’⁵

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ṣiyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ii. 139. ² IBN ḤAJAR, *Tabdhīb al-tabdhīb*, xii. 463. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ṣiyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ii. 210. ⁴ IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ii. 387. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ṣiyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, iv. 508.

Another expert of this period is the great *muḥaddithah* of Basrah, Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn, the sister of the renowned scholar Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn. Her ḥadīths too are found in all major compilations. Iyās ibn Muʿāwiyah relied on her in preference even to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn.¹ Al-Ṣafadī says: 'She was unique in her time: jurist, truthful, virtuous and of great rank.'²

Another expert of this period is the famous scholar of Syria, Umm al-Dardā', whose ḥadīths are also abundant in the sources. Al-Dhahabī praises her for her juristic knowledge and intelligence and for her devotion to worship.³ Ibn Kathīr said: 'She was a *tābiʿiyyah*, devout, scholar and jurist. Men studied with her and learnt *fiqh* from her in her teaching places on the north side of the [Umayyad] Mosque, and ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān when he was caliph used to sit in her circle with other students.'⁴

Among many examples of well-known women scholars of the second century, after the *tābiʿiyyāt*, are Umm al-Aswad al-Khuzāʿiyyah and ʿUbaydah bint Nabīl al-Ḥijāziyyah. Umm al-Aswad narrated ḥadīth from Munyah bint ʿUbayd al-Aslamiyyah and Umm Nāʾilah al-Khuzāʿiyyah.⁵ Aḥmad ibn ʿAbdillāh ibn Yūnus, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAmr al-Bajalī, Muslim ibn Ibrāhīm al-Azdī and Yūnus ibn Muḥammad al-Muʿaddib narrated from her. Al-ʿIjlī said: 'She was a reliable Kufan narrator.'⁶ ʿUbaydah bint Nabīl narrated from ʿĀʾishah bint Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ. Among her students were Ishāq ibn Muḥammad al-Farawī, al-Khaṣīb ibn Nāṣih, Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar al-Wāqidī and Maʿn ibn ʿIsā al-Qazzāz.⁷

It is clearly noticeable that, in terms of narrating ḥadīth, the time of the women Companions is the most shining period. This continued much the same into the time of their Successors. However, in the generation of those after the Successors, there are far fewer women whose ḥadīths are recorded in the famous

¹ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 152. ² AL-ṢAFADĪ, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, xiii. 106. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Tadhbīrat al-ḥuffāẓ* 53. ⁴ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, sub anno 82. ⁵ IBN ḤAJAR, *Tabdhīb al-tabdhīb*, xii. 486. ⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 239.

compilations. The most likely reason for this is that the men's interest in ḥadīth was becoming very strong and they were travelling extensively to collect ḥadīths from every city and in as short a time as possible – travelling then was arduous. So, when they were compiling ḥadīths, they recorded from the women of their generation only the ḥadīths that they could not get from men scholars, whom it was easier to find and find out about. This trend became still more pronounced in the next period.

SECOND PERIOD: 3rd–5th c. AH

This is the so-called 'golden period' of ḥadīth study, when the major genres of ḥadīth compilation and the major compilations are put together and circulated. It is also the period when travelling for 'the knowledge' is at its peak. In the beginning of the second century there are scholars of the rank of al-Zuhri (d. 124) in Madinah, 'Amr ibn Dīnār (d. 123) in Makkah, Qatādah and Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr in Basrah, Abū Ishāq al-Sab'ī and al-A'mash in Kufah; at the end of the century Mālik in Madinah, Ibn 'Uyaynah in Makkah, Shu'bah in Basrah, Sufyān al-Thawri in Kufah. By the beginning of the third century all the major centres of ḥadīth – in Kufah, Basrah, Baghdad, the Ḥaramayn, Syria and Egypt – are dominated by the male scholars. Women appear to be so far absent from the circles of ḥadīth teachers that we do not find a single woman named among the long list of the teachers of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī and Ibn Mājah, the authors of the Six Books. Before this period, by contrast, we find women named among the teachers of Abū Ḥanīfah, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thawri and Shu'bah. So, what might explain this abrupt absence of women teachers?

We need to differentiate between receiving 'the knowledge' and transmitting it. As for the former, women continued to study ḥadīth, and there is no indication that people paid less attention to the education of their daughters. It will be remembered that Mālik's daughter Fāṭimah memorized the whole of his *Muwattā* and became a narrator of ḥadīth, while his son did not.

The crucial difference appears to be the increased importance at this time of travelling between different teachers and different towns, and collecting the ḥadīth of every major centre of learning in the Islamic world. Women cannot have had the same facility to undertake long, arduous journeys in the path of knowledge or to absent themselves from their duties to family. With some exceptions, their ḥadīth were mostly acquired from their family and the scholars in the near locality.

Also, the travelling students are coming from outer regions into the heartlands of Islam – each of the authors of the Six Books is an example. In their places of origin ḥadīth scholarship, especially among women, is not yet established. So we cannot imagine them narrating from the women of their family or of their home towns. Then, on arriving in the heartlands of Islam, they have a very limited time in which to acquire as many ḥadīths as possible before moving on: naturally they would be inclined to sit with those teachers who have themselves travelled extensively and collected large numbers of ḥadīths. Also, being strangers, they can have had only limited, if any, knowledge of the women scholars active in the town they are passing through and only limited, if any, access to them. Finally, it will be very rare by the third century that a woman has knowledge of ḥadīths that have not been already circulated and can be heard reliably narrated by men, to whom the visiting students do have access.

That said, those scholars who had access to the *muḥaddithāt* in the heartlands of Islam did narrate from them and so their names, as also their ḥadīths, have survived. For example, in Madinah: Imām Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī (d. 813) narrates with his *iṣnād* to Bakr ibn Aḥmad al-Qaṣrī, who narrated from Fāṭimah bint ‘Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā (3rd century) from Fāṭimah, Zaynab and Umm Kulthūm, all three daughters of Mūsā ibn Ja‘far (3rd c.), who narrated from Fāṭimah bint Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (2nd c.) that she said: ‘Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī [2nd c.] narrated to me, saying: Fāṭimah bint ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn [1st c.] narrated to me saying that Fāṭimah and Sukaynah, daughters of Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī narrated to me from Umm Kulthūm bint



Fāṭimah bint al-Nabī – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – saying: Have you forgotten the Prophet’s word to ‘Alī: You are to me as Hārūn was to Mūsā.¹ Also in Madinah: ‘Ā’ishah bint al-Zubayr ibn Hishām ibn ‘Urwah, whose ḥadīths have been recorded by Qādī Abū ‘Abdillāh al-Mahāmili.² In Baghdad in this period, Rayḥānah wife of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and his slave Ḥusn, both received ḥadīth from him.³ In Kufah there was Fāṭimah bint al-Zayyāt. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī has narrated her ḥadīth.⁴ In Kufah there was Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sharīk, whose ḥadīths were recorded by Ḥafṣ ‘Umar ibn Shāhīn.⁵ In Basrah, the ḥadīths of Ghufayrah bint Wāqid were recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān.⁶ In Wāsiṭ, there was Fāṭimah bint Ishāq ibn Wahb ibn al-‘Allāf al-Wāsiṭī; her ḥadīths were recorded by Imām al-Ṭabarānī.⁷ In Syria, there was Umm al-‘Abbās Lubābah bint Yaḥyā ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Kharṛāz, whose ḥadīths were recorded by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī.⁸

Near the end of the third century ḥadīth activity started to decline, a trend that continued until the fifth. Perhaps the fourth century is the weakest for ḥadīth activity among women. In this century Baghdad is the major centre of *muḥaddithāt*. One of the famous ones among them is Amat al-Wāḥid bint al-Ḥusayn ibn Ismā‘īl al-Mahāmili (d. 377). Al-Dāraqutnī says: ‘She learnt ḥadīth from her father, Ismā‘īl ibn al-‘Abbās al-Warrāq, ‘Abd al-Ghāfir ibn Salāmah al-Ḥimṣī, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Miṣrī, Ḥamzah al-Hāshimī and others. She memorized the Qur’ān and learnt *fiqh* according to imām al-Shāfi‘ī’s school and other sciences.’⁹ Another example is Fāṭimah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥarrāniyyah (d. 312), who was born in Baghdad,

¹See IBN AL-JAZARĪ, *Asnā al-maṭālib*, 49. ²See AL-MAHĀMILĪ, *K. al-Dū‘ā’*, 186. ³Abū Ḥusayn IBN ABĪ YA‘LĀ, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābilah*, i. 429. ⁴AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Talkhīṣ al-mutashābih*, i. 113. ⁵IBN SHĀHĪN, *al-Targhīb fī faḍā’il al-a‘māl wa thawāb dhālik*, 167. ⁶IBN HĪBBĀN, *K. al-Thiqāt*, iv. 9. ⁷AL-ṬABARĀNĪ, *al-Mu‘jam al-ṣagḥīr*, ii. 151. ⁸AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Talkhīṣ al-mutashābih*, i. 482. ⁹Id., *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 443.

then brought to Egypt where people studied ḥadīth with her.¹ Another examples is Amat al-Salām bint al-Qāḍī Abī Bakr (d. 390); the names of a number of her students² are found in al-Khaṭīb.³

An important feature of this century is that we begin to find *muḥaddithāt* in Khurasan and Transoxania. Their numbers continued to grow in this part of the world until it was destroyed by the Mongols at the beginning of the seventh century. Among the famous traditionists of this area in the fourth century were: Umm Salamah ʿĀminah bint Abī Saʿīd al-Ḥasan ibn Ishāq ibn Bulbul al-Naysabūrī,⁴ Jumūʿah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ʿAbdillāh al-Maḥmiyyah from Nishapur (who also taught ḥadīth in Baghdad),⁵ and Umm ʿAbdillāh Zaynab bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-ʿIjlīyyah, who taught ḥadīth in Jurjan in 347.⁶

Toward the end of the fourth century we find the first records of people bringing young children, even infants, to the ḥadīth classes. Those who heard ḥadīth before they were five were expected to report their hearing by using the formula ‘we attended the hearing’ rather than ‘we heard’. However, some scholars did not approve even this. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of Abū l-Qāsim ʿAbdullāh ibn al-Ḥafīẓ Abī Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad al-Khallāl (385–470), brought by his father to hear ḥadīth from Abū Ḥafṣ al-Kattānī: ‘His hearing from al-Kattānī was when he was in his fifth year. From this time [...] the system went upside down. Rather, *ijāzah* is better in strength than [this] attendance, for whoever heard ḥadīth just attending [a class] without understanding, he did not receive anything. The one who has got *ijāzah* has got something. Yes if, along with the attendance, there is a permission from the shaykh, that is better.’⁷

¹ *Ibid.*, 441. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Taʾrīkh al-islām (sub anno 381–400)*, 195. ³ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 443. ⁴ See ‘Hasan bin Ishāq ibn Bulbul’ in IBN AL-ʿADĪM, *Bughyat al-ṭalab*, 2295–98. ⁵ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād*, xiv. 444. ⁶ AL-SAHMĪ, *Taʾrīkh Jurjān*, 506. ⁷ See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar aʿlām al-nubalāʾ*, xviii. 369.

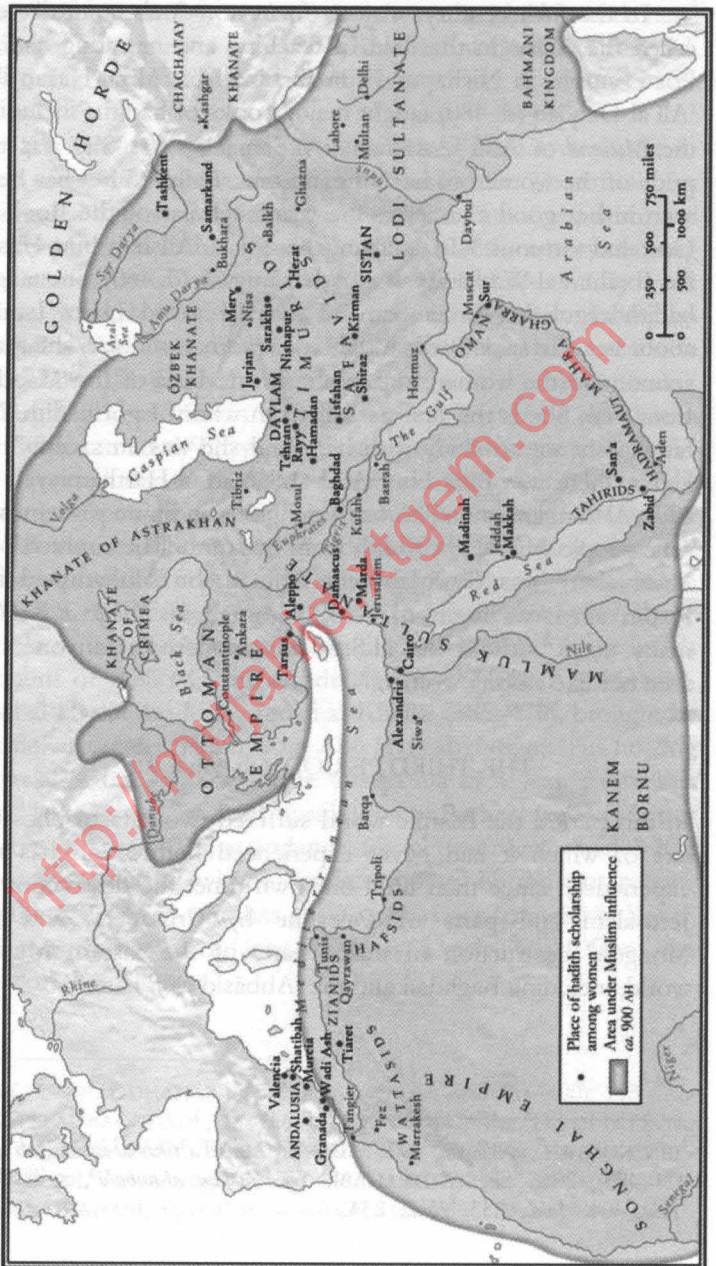
In the fifth century, women from non-Arab countries excelled the Arabs in the field of teaching and narrating ḥadīth. For example, in Nishapur Fāṭimah bint Abī ‘Alī al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Daqqāq (d. 480) taught major books of ḥadīths including the *Musnad* of Abū ‘Awāmah.¹ Al-Sam‘ānī says: ‘She was the pride of the women of her time, no one similar to her has been seen in her good character; she was a scholar of the Book of God and virtuous.’² In Isfahan, there was ‘Ā’ishah bint Ḥasan ibn Ibrāhīm al-Warkāniyyah al-Aṣbahāniyyah (d. 460). She taught ḥadīth regularly. Ibn al-Sam‘ānī says: ‘I asked Ḥāfiẓ Ismā‘īl about her. He said: She is a righteous woman scholar; she gives sermons to the women; she wrote down *Amālī* of Ibn Mandah from him. She is the first person from whom I got ḥadīth. My father sent me to study with her. And she was an ascetic.’³ In Herat, there was Bībā bint ‘Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harthamiyyah (d. 477). Al-Sam‘ānī says: ‘She was a righteous and pure woman’ and ‘The people who learnt ḥadīth from her cannot be counted.’⁴ In Marw there was Karīmah bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥaṭīm al-Marwaziyyah (d. 465) who taught *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* many times.⁵ About her al-Sam‘ānī wondered if anyone had seen her like among women.⁶

THE THIRD PERIOD: 6th–9th c. AH

In this period the Islamic world suffered two catastrophes the like of which it had never experienced before and has not experienced since then until our own time: the destruction of Jerusalem and parts of Palestine by Crusaders, and the Mongols’ destruction of major parts of the eastern Muslim world, including Baghdad and the ‘Abbāsid caliphate.

¹ IBN NUQṬAH, *al-Taḥqīd*, 497. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta’rīkh al-islām (sub anno 471–480)*, 296. ³ See AL-DHAHABĪ, *Sīyar a’lām al-nubalā’*, xviii. 302. ⁴ *Ibid.*, 404. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 233. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

Map 4. Islamic world. Spread of *muḥaddithāt* 6th–9th c.



Yet, in spite of the destruction suffered during it, this period is characterized by a revival of ḥadīth sciences, after a long period when *fiqh* had been more dominant. This revival is also reflected in the women's role in study and teaching of ḥadīth. Indeed, except for the time of the women Companions, this period is the best for the women's advancement in, and major contribution to, ḥadīth. The comment by al-Dhahabī quoted earlier refers to this time: in his biographical account of Imām Ḥāfiẓ Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd ibn al-Najjār (578–643), he writes: 'Ibn al-Sā'ātī says: Among his teachers were three thousand men and four hundred women.'¹

How could so great a disaster as the loss of Jerusalem and major defeats in Central Asia and Mesopotamia coincide with the rise of interest in ḥadīth? The answer is that great catastrophes can shake people up, individually and collectively, enable them to re-think their commitments, to either save or forever lose their way of life. The terrible events the Muslims had to endure led them to return to their tradition and strive to rescue their religion and reform their society. For Muslims, the only reform that is sound Islamically is the one that strives to guide people by the *Sunnah* of God's Messenger, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*. This explanation is supported by the fact that the revival began with the scholars of Jerusalem and the people of Syria – they were the ones most directly affected by the political and military disaster of the Crusades. Ibn Asākir al-Dimashqī and the family of Ibn Qudāmāh, who left Jerusalem as the Crusaders occupied it, settled in Damascus. Here they revived the ḥadīth sciences; then, others of the same mind later joined them from elsewhere in Syria. Their women also participated in this great effort to consolidate and revive 'the knowledge'.

When the renewed quest for the knowledge first began, the major centres of ḥadīth were not in Damascus or Cairo. Rather, people in quest of the knowledge had to travel to Baghdad or, further east, to Isfahan. In Baghdad there were a large number

¹*Ibid.*, xxiii. 133.

of female traditionists to whom the people travelled. The most important among them was Shuhdah bint al-Ibrī (d. 574) and Tājanni bint ‘Abdillāh al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575). All the major traditionists of the time studied with them. In Isfahan the most important shaykhah at this time was Fāṭimah bint ‘Abdillāh al-Jūzdāniyyah (d. 524), considered one of the most outstanding figures in the whole history of ḥadīth. It is her student Fāṭimah bint Sa‘d al-Khayr (d. 600) who diffused ḥadīth in Damascus and then in Cairo. By the end of this century, ḥadīth sciences had strengthened greatly in Damascus so that it was becoming established as a major centre. Among the women teachers of ḥadīth of this period was Āminah bint Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Ṭāhir ibn al-Rār al-Dimashqiyyah (d. 595). She studied ḥadīth with her grandfather, the qāḍī Abū l-Mufaddal Yaḥyā ibn ‘Alī al-Qurashī and Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah. Her father obtained for her a copy of Sunan of Abū Dāwūd, and she read part of it with ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn Ḥamzah.¹ Qāḍī Muḥyī l-Dīn Abū l-Ma‘ālī ibn al-Zakī, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qūṣī and others studied with her. She also endowed a *ribāṭ* in Damascus.²

That Ibn al-Najjār studied ḥadīth with four hundred women teachers during this period is not the only record we have of their activity. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571) received ḥadīth from more than 80 women. His colleague and a famous traditionist Abū Sa‘d al-Sam‘ānī (d. 562) has provided accounts of 69 of his shaykhahs. Abū Ṭāhir al-Silafī (d. 576) studied with a score of women teachers. Even Ibn al-Jawzī, a famous scholar and great preacher who never travelled, has narrated from three women.

The seventh century began with the cataclysm of the Mongol devastation. Chinggiz Khan began his campaign against the Khwarizmshah in 616. His hordes destroyed Bukhara, Samarqand, Hamadan, Zinjan, Qazwin, Marw, and Nishapur. Under his grandson Hulagu they entered Baghdad and laid waste to the city, all its treasures, including its libraries, and massacred its

¹ IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā’*, 49. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta’rīkh al-Islām (sub anno 591–600)*, 180.

people. Then they headed to Aleppo and did the same. They occupied Damascus in Jumādā al-Ūlā 658. On their march to Egypt they suffered their first major defeat in ‘Ayn Jālūt in Ramaḍān 658. Then the Mamlūk sultān Baybars turned the tide of war decisively in the Muslims’ favour and forced the Mongols to flee Syria, although they remained on its borders and the danger of incursions and looting raids persisted.

The consequences of the Mongols’ invasion were severe. The centres of scholarship of Samarqand, Bukhara, Nishapur and Baghdad were utterly devastated, and they never regained their importance as centres of ḥadīth study and teaching. It is a mercy that just before that disaster, Syria and Egypt had become established as major focal points for Islamic scholarship.

The Mamlūk rule over Egypt and Syria endured from 648 to 923. During this period scholarly life became more dynamic, and many grand colleges and mosques were built in the Mamluk domains. The revival of ḥadīth had begun in Syria, before it took hold in Egypt, when (as I noted earlier) the family, friends and followers of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah left Palestine in 551 and settled in Qāsyūn in Damascus. Here Shaykh Abū ‘Umar Muḥammad ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisī built al-Madrasah al-‘Umariyyah in 555. Some years later, in 599, Jāmi‘ al-Ḥanābilah was built there. Both were very important centres for ḥadīth science. The first centre dedicated expressly for the study of ḥadīth was Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūriyyah in Damascus in 559 founded by the sultān Nūr al-Dīn al-Shahīd. Al-Malik al-Kāmil al-Ayyūbī built Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Kāmiliyyah in 622 in Cairo and his brother al-Malik al-Ashraf built two more centres for ḥadīth study in Damascus. These institutions proved to be vital resources for the community in Syria and Egypt, in the seventh century and subsequently. They always included women teachers and women students, most of whose names are preserved in the records of *samā‘āt* attached to the ḥadīth books.

In my biographical dictionary of the *muhaddithāt*, five volumes are devoted to the women of the seventh century, and six volumes each for the eighth and ninth centuries. As well as

Syria and Egypt, ḥadīth scholarship among women also grew in the cities of the Ḥaramayn. Perhaps some 90% of the entries in the dictionary for the seventh to ninth centuries are for the women of Syria, Egypt, and the Ḥaramayn.

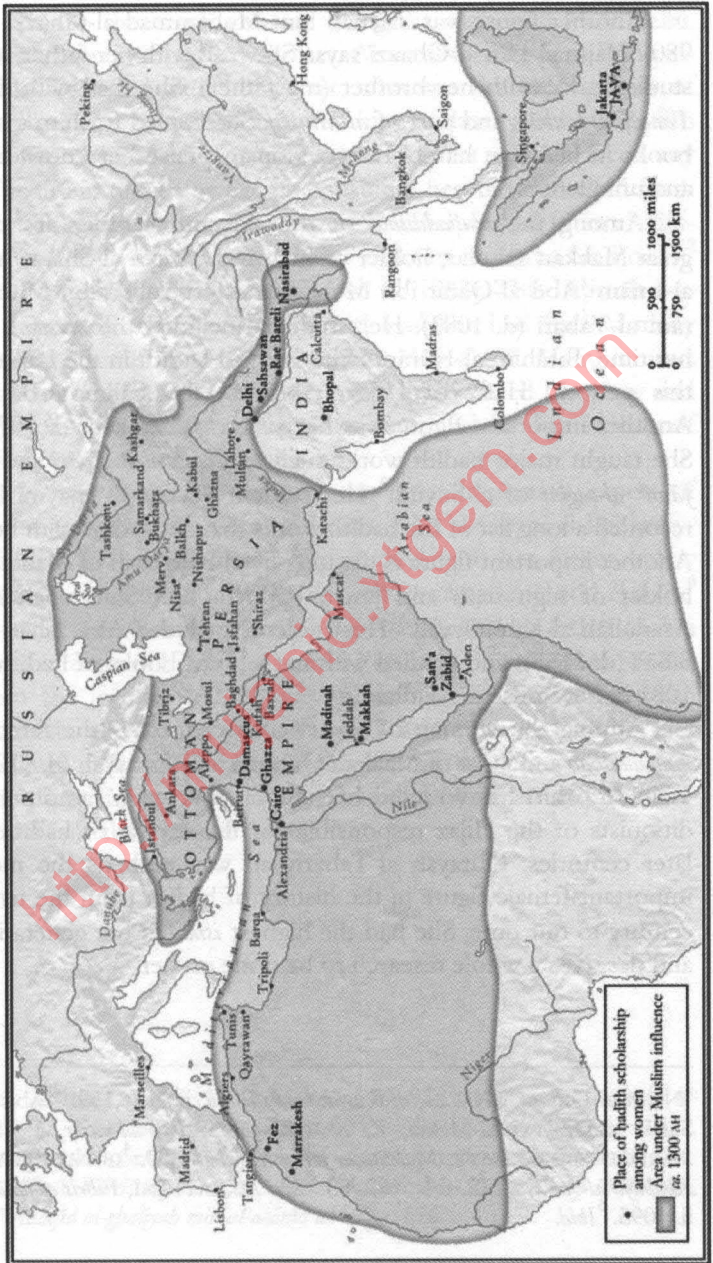
THE FOURTH PERIOD: 900–1500 AH

This period is one of decline, so that a single volume of the biographical dictionary suffices for each century. The decline is not confined to women, nor only to the study of ḥadīth. Rather, it is a general phenomenon affecting men as well as women, and all branches of the Islamic sciences.

Among the most prominent women teachers of ḥadīth in this period were: Umm al-Khayr Amat al-Khāliq al-Dimash-qīyyah (d. 902). Al-Suyūṭī says about her: ‘By her death people fell one rank in ḥadīth; for she was the last person who narrated from ‘Ā’ishah bint ‘Abd al-Ḥadī, who was the last student of al-Ḥajjār.’¹ Another important figure is ‘Ā’ishah bint Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī ‘Umar al-Ḥanbaliyyah (d. 906). Ibn Ṭulūn says about her: ‘She studied ḥadīth with a group of people including Abū Bakr ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn, with whom she studied *al-Majlis al-Awwal* of his *‘Amālī*, which contains *al-Musalsal bi-l-awwalīyyah* and a commentary on it. Ibn Ṭulūn studied with her.’² Another famous figure is Shaykhah of Zabid, Aṣmā’ bint Kamāl al-Dīn Mūsā al-Ḍajā’ī (d. 904). Al-‘Aydrūsī says about her: ‘She was righteous; a devout; reciter of the Qur’ān; she used to read *tafsīr* and books of ḥadīth, and taught women, gave sermons to them, and taught them self-discipline. Her words had an impact on the heart. Sometimes she wrote letters of commendation to the sultan, qāḍī and *amīr*, her recommendations were accepted and not rejected.’³

¹ AL-SUYŪṬĪ, *al-Minjam fī l-mu‘jam*, 99. ² IBN HUMAYD, *al-Suḥub al-wābilah*, 511. ³ AL-‘AYDRŪSĪ, *al-Nūr al-sāfir*, 40.

Map 5. Islamic world. Spread of *muḥaddithāt* 10th–14th c.



Another figure was Zaynab bint Muḥammad al-Ghazzī (d. 980). Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī says: 'She read with her father, and studied a lot with her brother (my father). She read with him *Tanqīḥ al-Lubāb*, and part of *al-Minhāj*. She copied for him many books in her own hand.' He goes on to praise her knowledge and uniqueness.¹

Among the *muḥaddithāt* of the eleventh century are: the great Makkan scholar, holder of high *isnād*, Zayn al-Sharaf bint al-Imām 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Mukarram al-Ṭabarī (d. 1083). Her students included the *musnads* of her time, Ibrāhīm al-Kūrānī (who revived ḥadīth in the Hijaz in this period), Ḥāfiẓ of Hijaz 'Abdullāh ibn Sālim al-Baṣrī.² Another important figure was her sister Mubārakah (d. 1075). She taught major ḥadīth works such as *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḡhīr* of al-Suyūṭī.³ Her student Hasan al-'Ujaymī has recorded a long list of the ḥadīth works that he studied with her.⁴ Another important figure is the long-lived Shaykhah of Madinah, holder of high *isnād* and jurist, Fāṭimah bint Shukrullāh ibn Asadullāh al-Kūrāniyyah.⁵ Her students included Abū Ishāq al-Sibā'ī (d. 1155) who studied with her a lot of books of ḥadīth in 1081 in her house in Madinah.⁶

Among the women of the twelfth century is the famous *muḥaddithah* and jurist of Makkah Quraysh al-Ṭabariyyah (d. 1107). Fāliḥ al-Zāhiri has counted her among the seven famous traditionists of the Hijaz responsible for the revival of ḥadīth in later centuries. Quraysh al-Ṭabariyyah was perhaps the most important female figure in the history of ḥadīth from the tenth century to our time. She had the highest *isnād* in her generation and deserves a whole research to be done on her.

¹Najm al-Dīn AL-GHAZZI, *al-Kawākib al-sā'irah*, iii. 138,139. ²'Abd al-Sattār al-Dihlawī al-Makkī, *K. al-Aẓḥār al-ṭayyibah al-nashr*, 1. ³See MARDĀD ABŪ L-KHAYR, *Mukhtaṣar nashr al-ẓubūr*, 399. ⁴IBN AL-'UJAYM, *Khabāyā al-ẓawāyā*, MS. fols. 182–83. ⁵See AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihri al-fabāris*, ii. 1095. ⁶*Ibid*.

In the thirteenth century the great *muhaddithah* of Delhi, from a family of ḥadīth scholars, Amat al-Ghafūr bint Ishāq al-Dihlawī studied with her father, who was the best scholar of ḥadīth at that time. She acquired high authority in both ḥadīth and *fiqh*. When her husband, himself a great scholar, faced any difficulty in ḥadīth or *fiqh* he consulted her and benefited from her.¹ Other important figures were Raḥmah bint al-Jinān al-Mik-nāsiyyah, who learnt many ḥadīths by heart from the Six Books,² and Fāṭimah bint Ḥamad al-Fuḍaylī (d. 1247). This Fāṭimah was an expert of *tafsīr*, ḥadīth, *fiqh* and *uṣūl*. She had studied many books of ḥadīth and received many *Musalsalāt*. Many famous scholars of Makkah studied with her and praised her piety and righteousness, devotion and asceticism, and for her writing of many books in beautiful calligraphy.³

In the fourteenth century the most important expert of ḥadīth was Amatullāh bint al-Imām ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Dihlawiy-yah (d. 1357) in Madinah. She studied with her father, many times over, all the Six Books, as well as many *ajzā’* and *thabats*.⁴ She also received from him all the *Musalsalāt*. Her father took a lot of interest in her education and obtained high *ijāzahs* for her from the leading traditionists of that time.⁵ At her home in Madinah, she taught *Qudūrī* as well as books of ḥadīth.⁶ Her students included the major scholars of the time, like ‘Umar Ḥamdān al-Maḥrasī (d. 1368), Aḥmad al-Ghumārī and Muḥammad Yāsīn al-Fadānī (d. 1410).

¹See AL-HASANĪ, *Nuzḥat al-khawātir*, vii. 93. ²KAḤḤĀLAH, *A‘lām al-nisā’*, i. 445. ³See IBN AL-ḤUMAYD, *al-Suḥub al-wābīlah*, iii. 1227. ⁴Notebooks containing details of one’s narrations or teachers. ⁵AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fibris al-fahāris*, ii. 1115. ⁶Muḥammad ‘Ashiq Ilāhī AL-BARNĪ, *al-‘Anāqīd al-ghāliyah min al-asānīd al-‘āliya*, 176.

OVERVIEW BY REGION

Ḥijāz

The centres of ḥadīth scholarship in the Ḥijāz were the cities of the Ḥaramayn, Makkah and Madinah. Madinah was the first centre for ḥadīth scholarship in the world for the good reason that the Companions were based there. Students travelled to Madinah from Iraq and Syria in order to learn the *Sunnah* from the Companions, men and women. Madinah remained an active locus of ḥadīth study until the end of the second century. After that only a small number of *muḥaddithāt* were based there until the ninth century, when the revival of ḥadīth scholarship started in Madinah and continued until the fourteenth century. The traditionists, including women, who visited Madinah as part of their ḥajj or *ʿumrah* journeys, also sometimes taught ḥadīth there. The most important *muḥaddithah* from among the outsiders was Fāṭimah al-Baṭāʾiḥiyyah, who came there from Syria. She taught in the mosque of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalayhi wa sallam*, and great scholars studied with her. Among the last major traditionists in Madinah were the just mentioned Amatullāh bint ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Dihlawiyyah (d. 1357) and Fāṭimah Shams Jahān al-Jarkasiyyah, the wife of Shaykh al-Islām ʿArif al-Turkī. Among those who studied with her were scholars such as Ḥāfiẓ ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī (d. 1382) and ʿUmar Hamdān al-Maḥrasī (d. 1368).¹

Because of ḥajj, Makkah always had some ḥadīth teachers. In the first centuries, ḥadīth was a little weak there among the women. Perhaps the most famous *muḥaddithah* to teach there was Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah in the fifth century. She taught the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* there many times. Ḥadīth scholarship became stronger in Makkah in the eighth century and women traditionists continued to turn up there until the fourteenth century. Perhaps the last woman traditionist in Makkah was the

¹ AL-KATTĀNĪ, *Fihris al-fahāris*, ii. 724.

pious and righteous shaykhah, Āminah bint al-Ḥabīb Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Ḥibashī (d. 1342). She studied ḥadīth with her father, the mufti of Makkah, and her husband Imām ‘Alawī ibn Aḥmad al-Saqqāf.¹

Iraq

Basrah evolved in the first century as the second centre after Madinah for ḥadīth scholarship among women. It was strengthened there by the stay of ‘Ā’ishah, as I mentioned earlier. The ḥadīths narrated from that time are recorded in all the major compilations. It was further enhanced by the migration there of the famous Companion and great jurist, Umm ‘Atiyyah al-Anṣāriyyah. A number of the Companions and important Successors in Basrah received the knowledge from her.² Baqī ibn Makhlad has recorded forty of her ḥadīth in his *Musnad*.³

Among the famous *muḥaddithāt* of the generation of the Successors were Ḥafṣah bint Sīrīn, who diffused much knowledge in Basrah. There also was Mu‘ādhah al-‘Adawiyyah, wife of Ṣilah ibn Ashyam. Ḥadīth activity remained strong among the women of Basrah until the end of the second century. After that I did not find any record in the sources of an important *muḥaddithah* based there.

For the women, the most important centre of ḥadīth after Basrah has been Kufah. Among the traditionist Companions who settled there are: Zaynab bint Abī Mu‘āwiyah al-Thaqafiyyah the wife of ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd, Salāmah bint Ḥurr al-Fuzāriyyah,⁴ Jamrah bint ‘Abdillāh al-Yarbū‘iyyah al-Tamīmiyyah,⁵ Fāṭimah bint al-Yamān,⁶ Qutaylah bint Sayf al-Anṣāriyyah,⁷ Māriyah,⁸ the servant of the Prophet, Umm Yāsir al-Anṣār-

¹See AL-ḤIBASHĪ, *al-Dalīl al-mushīr*, 66. ²IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Istī‘āb*, ii. 777. ³See BAQĪ IBN MAKHLAD (ed. Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhirī) *‘Adad mā li-Kull wāḥid min al-ṣaḥābha min al-ḥadīth*, 87. ⁴MUSLIM, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, i. 219. ⁵AL-ASKARĪ, *Taṣḥīfāt al-muḥaddithīn*, 888. ⁶MUSLIM, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, i. 219. ⁷AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 270. ⁸IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Istī‘āb*, ii. 762.

iyah,¹ and Jasrah bint Dajājah al-Kūfiyyah, whose being a Companion is disputed.² She narrated ḥadīth from Abū Dharr, ‘Alī, ‘Ā’ishah and Umm Salamah; al-‘Ijlī has confirmed her reliability.³ The most important Companion who travelled and diffused knowledge there was Fāṭimah bint Qays.⁴ Among the Successors in Kufah the most important woman narrator was Qamīr bint ‘Amr al-Kūfiyyah, wife of the famous scholar Masrūq ibn al-Ajda.⁵ Hādīth scholarship remained active among the women of Kufah until the end of the second century.

From the beginning of the third century, Baghdad emerged as the main centre of women’s ḥadīth scholarship. The most important figure there was Umm ‘Umar bint Abī l-Ghuṣn Ḥasān ibn Zayd al-Thaqafiyyah, who narrated from her father, and from her husband Sa‘īd ibn Yaḥyā ibn Qays. Abū Ibrāhīm al-Tarjumānī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Muḥammad ibn al-Ṣabbāḥ al-Jarjarā’ī, Ibrāhīm ibn ‘Abdillāh al-Harawī and ‘Alī ibn Muslim al-Ṭūsī are among those who narrated from her.⁶ Also figures of significance in this century were the women of the house of Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the sisters of Bishr al-Hāfi and others. For ḥadīth scholarship among women the greatest centre remained Baghdad until the end of the sixth century. The last of the major women scholars to teach ḥadīth there extensively were Shuhdah al-Kātibah (d. 574) and Tajannī al-Wahbāniyyah (d. 575). After the Mongols’ devastation of Baghdad in the seventh century, its shining history as a centre of ḥadīth scholarship, whether for men or for women, ended and has never been recovered.

al-Shām (Greater Syria)

Hādīth scholarship was established in Syria also in the first century. At that time the excellent *muḥaddithah* and jurist Umm al-Dardā’ taught ḥadīth and *fiqh* in her house and also in the mosques of Damascus and Jerusalem. Fāṭimah bint ‘Abd al-

¹ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 325. ² IBN HAJAR, *al-Iṣābah fī Tamayyūz al-ṣaḥābah*, iv. 267. ³ *Ibid.*, 266. ⁴ IBN AL-ATHĪR, *Uṣd al-ghābah*, vii. 224. ⁵ IBN MĀKŪLĀ, *al-Ikmāl*, vii. 100. ⁶ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *Tarīq Baghdad*, xiv. 432.

Malik ibn Marwān, wife of the righteous caliph ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, was also an active ḥadīth narrator in Damascus at the end of the first century, as affirmed by the famous historian, Abū Zurʿah al-Dimashqī.¹ After the generation of the Successors, ḥadīth scholarship among women in Syria lessened; the sources do not record any major Syrian *muhaddithah* until the end of the fifth century. The sixth witnessed a revival on a scale without parallel anywhere in the Islamic world in any period of its history. In the seventh, Syria became the most important centre of ḥadīth scholarship for both men and women. That continued throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. After the tenth it declined, as elsewhere in the Islamic world.

The quality and scale of interest of Syrian traditionists in major compilations of ḥadīth and small *ajzāʾ*, whether learning and hearing them or teaching and transmitting them is quite extraordinary. Here in this period we find women learning ḥadīth and teaching it in al-Madrasah al-ʿUmayyiyah and other colleges, in the grand Umayyad mosque, the Jāmiʿ al-Muẓaffarī and other mosques; in *ribāṭs*, in gardens and private houses. Sometimes the classes of these women were attended by hundreds of both men and women.

Some of these Syrian women teachers are distinguished by having the highest *isnād*. The one who narrated the whole *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with the highest *isnād* among men or women was ʿĀʾishah bint ibn ʿAbd al-Hadī (d. 816) from Damascus, the last student of al-Hajjār in the world. Before her, by a century, was Sitt al-Wuzarāʾ al-Tanūkhīyyah (d. 716), the last student of Ḥusayn ibn al-Mubārak al-Zabīdī and Abū l-Munajjā Ibn al-Lattī among all the woman of the world. And there was Zaynab bint al-Kamāl (d.740) who outdid men and women alike in the sheer abundance of her teaching of both major books and small *ajzāʾ*.

¹ IBN ʿASĀKIR, *Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājīm al-nisāʾ*, 291.

Egypt

Ḥadīth scholarship first came to Egypt also in the first century. Perhaps the best woman scholar to come to Egypt was the righteous and noble Nafīṣah bint Amīr al-Mu'minīn al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib al-'Alawiyyah al-Ḥasaniyyah (d. 208). Ibn Kathīr says: 'She was a wealthy lady, did a lot of favours to the people, especially those paralysed, those with severe illness, and to all other ill people. She was a devout, ascetic, and of abundant virtue. When Imām al-Shāfi'ī arrived in Egypt, she did good to him, and sometimes Shāfi'ī led her in prayers in Ramaḍān.'¹ Al-Yāfi'ī says: 'It is narrated that when Imām Shāfi'ī came to Egypt, he called upon her and heard ḥadīth from her, and when he died, his funeral was carried to her and she prayed over him in her house.'² Ibn al-'Imād says: 'Her connections: al-Shāfi'ī receiving ḥadīth from her and being carried to her house after [his] death are the greatest [signs] of her merits. This could not have been without her popularity, fame, honour and respect among the people.'³

In Egypt in the fourth century there was the mother of Ḥasan ibn 'Alī al-Ṣadafī, Umm Ḥabīb Ṣafwah (d. 379). Al-Dhahabī says: 'She had a lot of ḥadīth. Her father was a *muḥaddith*, his son and her sisters also. She taught ḥadīth.'⁴

But ḥadīth science was really activated among the women of Egypt when Fāṭimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr (d. 600) emigrated there. Al-Dhahabī says in his account of her: 'She married Ibn Najā al-Wā'iz who brought her to Damascus, then settled with her in Egypt. The Egyptians learnt much from her.'⁵ After Fāṭimah, there was Taqiyyah bint Abī l-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn 'Abdillāh al-Qurashī, (d. 606) who learned ḥadīth from her father and got *ijāzah* from a group of scholars including Abū l-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn 'Abdillāh ibn al-Ṭufayl, al-'Allāmah Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥam-

¹ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah*, sub anno 208. ² AL-YĀFI'Ī, *Mir'āt al-jinān*, ii. 43. ³ IBN AL-'IMĀD, *Shadharāt al-Dhabab*, ii. 21. ⁴ IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Iṣābah fī tamyīz al-ṣaḥābah*, iv. 267. ⁵ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām* (sub anno 591–600), 469.

mad ibn Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Aṣbahānī, Muḥammad ibn Amīrkā ibn Abī l-Faṭḥ al-Dimashqī, Abū Nizār Rabī‘ah ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥaḍramī, Abū ‘Abdillāh ibn al-Bannā’ al-Ṣūfī, ‘Alī ibn Abī l-Karam al-Khallāl ibn al-Bannā’ al-Makkī and others.¹ In Alexandria there was Khadijah bint al-Ḥāfiẓ Abī Ṭāhir al-Silafī (d. 623) who studied with her father, and taught ḥadīth. Her students included Ḥāfiẓ Zakī al-Dīn al-Mundhirī.²

Ḥadīth scholarship among women in Egypt reached its zenith in the eighth–ninth centuries. In the eighth, there was the famous *muḥaddithah*, Wajīhah bint ‘Alī al-Anṣāriyyah (d. 732). She studied with Ibn Zuwayn, Ibn al-Naḥḥās, Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Qarāfi, ‘Abd al-Karīm ibn ‘Abd al-Bārī al-Ṣā‘idī and Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Futūḥ ibn Khalaf al-Ṣūfī, and she got *ijāzah* from Yūsuf al-Sāwī, Ibn Rawāj, Ya‘qūb al-Hamdānī and others.³ Another famous figure of Egypt in this period was the righteous shaykhah and holder of high *isnād*, Juwayriyah bint al-Imām Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Aḥmad al-Ḥakkārī (d. 783). She studied *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with Abū l-‘Abbās al-Ḥijjār and Wazīrah; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* with Sharīf Mūsā ibn ‘Alī al-Mūsawī, *Musnad* of al-Dārimī and *Musnad* of ‘Abd ibn Ḥunayd with Ḥasan ibn ‘Umar al-Kurdī, part of *Sunan* of al-Nasa‘ī and *Musnad* of ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd with ‘Alī ibn Naṣrullāh al-Ṣawwāf; *Kitāb al-Ba‘th wa-l-nushūr* of Ibn Abī Dāwūd with ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn Hārūn al-Tha‘labī, the first part of *Hādīth Sufyān ibn ‘Uyaynah* of al-Thaqafi and a piece of *Mustakbraj* of al-Ismā‘īlī with ‘Alī ibn ‘Īsā ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Faraj ba‘d al-shiddah* of Ibn Abī l-Dunyā with Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā ibn al-Ṭabbākh; second part of *Hādīth Ibn al-Sammāk* with Zaynab bint Shukr, *Ḥadīth al-Buḥayrī* and *al-Shāfi‘ī* with Mīnāl al-Asrafi and *Juz‘ al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Arafah* with Kamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Shurayshī. Ibn al-Miḥtār and others gave her *ijāzah*.⁴

¹ IBN AL-ṢĀBŪNĪ, *Takmilah ikmāl al-ikmāl*, 52. ² AL-MUNDHIRĪ, *al-Takmilah li wafayāt al-naqlah*, iii. 187. ³ IBN HAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, iv. 406.

⁴ TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-FĀSĪ, *Dhayl al-taqyūd*, ii. 361–62.

Hāfiẓ Abū Zur‘ah al-‘Irāqī studied with her all the above-listed books,¹ which she taught many times.²

In the ninth century, there were many women teachers of Hāfiẓ Ibn Ḥajar. Hāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī and Hāfiẓ al-Suyūṭī had women teachers, among them Sārah bint Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 805), who taught many, including Ibn Ḥajar.³ Among other *muḥaddithāt* there was Maryam bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Adhrā‘ī (d. 805), the last student of al-Wānī and al-Dabūsī; Ibn Ḥajar studied a great number of books with her.⁴ Sārah bint ‘Umar ibn Jamā‘h al-Kinānī (d. 855) narrated a lot of ḥadīth and great experts studied extensively with her. Al-Sakhāwī studied with her so many books and ḥadīths that he could not enumerate them all; he says: ‘She was righteous, poor; that is why we helped her. She had intelligence, and accuracy in teaching ḥadīth, and patience for long sessions. With her death, people of Egypt fell one degree.’⁵ Juwayriyah bint al-Hāfiẓ ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-‘Irāqī (d. 863) studied ḥadīth with her father; heard the ḥadīth *al-Musalsal bi-l-annwaliyyah*, *Juz’ al-Ghadā’irī*, some parts of *Amālī* of Ibn al-Ḥusayn, part of *‘Ushariyyāt* of her father with Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, and some parts of *Mu‘jam al-Dabūsī* with Taqī al-Dīn ibn Jamā‘ah. She got *ijāzahs* from a very large number of people.⁶ Experts of ḥadīth including al-Sakhāwī studied with her.

Spain and Morocco

Ḥadīth became popular in this part of the world in the second century, especially after the arrival of students of Imām Mālik, and then Baqī ibn Makhlad. Here too there were women who studied *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* with Abū Dharr. Among the most well-known traditionists of Spain was Umm al-Ḥassān bint Abī Liwā’

¹IBN AL-‘IRĀQĪ, *al-Dhayl ‘alā l-‘Ibar*, ii. 513. ²IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, i. 544. ³IBN ḤAJAR, *Inbā’ al-ghumr*, v. 102; AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi’*, xii. 52. ⁴IBN ḤAJAR, *al-Durar al-kāminah*, iv. 88. ⁵AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi’*, xii. 52. ⁶AL-NAJM IBN FAHD, *Mu‘jam al-shuyūkh*, 401–02. ⁷AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw’ al-lāmi’*, xii. 18.

Sulaymān ibn Aṣḡagh al-Miknāsī from Cordoba, who narrated ḡadīth from Baqī ibn Makhlad, studied with him, accompanied him, and herself read to him *K. al-Dubūr*.¹

Another early narrator was Aṣmā' bint Asad ibn al-Furāt, who studied with her father, a student of Abū Ḥanīfah and Mālik ibn Anas. She was well known for the narration of ḡadīth and *fiqh* according to the *madhhab* of Abū Ḥanīfah. Her upbringing was exemplary: in the company of her father, she attended the assemblies of knowledge and participated in the questions and discussion.² Another famous *muhaddithah* was Khadījah bint al-Imām Ṣaḡnūn. She first received knowledge from her father and then went on to teach and give fatwas. Her father consulted her in important matters: when the post of judge was offered to him, he accepted it only after consulting her.³

Later on, after Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 462), *fiqh* became more dominant in Spain and North African countries. Later on, Ḥāfiṣ Muḡammad ibn Ja'far al-Kattānī and 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Kattānī revived the science of ḡadīth there and then many women became eminent in that field.

The region of Khurasan and Transoxania

The science of ḡadīth first appeared in Khurasan and Transoxania in the second century, and became very strong in the third, the period of the authors of the Six Books and many others. The sources record the involvement of women of this region in ḡadīth scholarship from the end of the third century, then its growth through the fourth and fifth centuries until, in the field of ḡadīth studies, the women of this region leave the women of the rest of the Islamic world far behind. In the fifth century there were women of the calibre of Karīmah al-Marwaziyyah, famous teacher of Ṣaḡīḡ al-Bukḡarī, and Bībā bint 'Abd al-Ṣamad al-Harwiyyah. In the sixth, Fāṭimah al-Jūzdāniyyah was distinguished for her narration of *al-Mu'jam al-ṣaḡḡir* and *al-Mu'jam al-*

¹ IBN AL-ABBĀR, *Takmilah ṣilat al-ṣilah*, 401. ² KAḡḡĀLAH, *A'lam al-nisā'*, i. 45. ³ *Ibid.*, 332.

ḵabīr of al-Ṭabarānī. Scholars travelled from every part of the Islamic world in order to study ḥadīth with her.

The fifth and sixth centuries are the peak of ḥadīth activity among the women of this region. When the Mongols destroyed its major cities, the ḥadīth scholarship in them was destroyed too, and has not yet returned to this region.

India

Ḥadīth scholarship entered Sind and the western part of India in the second century, but failed to penetrate inside mainland India until very late. Some efforts in the field were made in India in the ninth–tenth century when ḥadīth scholarship was already experiencing decline in most parts of the Islamic world. In this period in India the activity of scholars of ḥadīth was confined to reading and writing commentaries on some books until Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm al-Dihlawī, better known as Shāh Walīullāh (d. 1176), breathed new spirit into the discipline as it was practised in India. Largely because of his efforts India became a centre for the revival of ḥadīth scholarship.

However, only a small number of women excelled in this field in India, most of them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Important among them were women of the family of Shāh Walīullāh and those of the family of Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1034). Among others, there were: Shams al-Nisā’ bint Amīr Ḥasan al-Saḥsawānī (d. 1308)¹ and Ṣāliḥah bint ‘Ināyat Rasūl al-Chirayyākotī (d. 1318), both of whom were taught major books of ḥadīth.²

¹See AL-ḤASANĪ, *Nuḣbat al-ḵhawāṭir*, viii. 185. ²*Ibid.*, 195.

Chapter 10

Fiqh and ʿamal

In this last chapter I come to what the whole effort of ḥadīth activity is for. Much of what the *muḥaddithāt* were concerned with was the transmission of accurate texts through verified chains of narration. However, phrases like ‘they taught ḥadīth’ or ‘they narrated ḥadīth’ probably do not convey to a modern readership the whole of what they were engaged in, or its purpose. The bare fact is that – assuming motivation for the effort – even a non-Muslim could in theory be relied on to hold and transmit a bundle of texts accurately. Within functioning Islamic society, authority does not derive from that sort of academic integrity and competence alone. Rather, it derives from those qualities *combined with* piety and virtue in manners and conduct. The test and expression of the relevant qualities combined are *fiqh* and *ʿamal*.

Fiqh means understanding the legal import of the texts: how they inform rules and norms to guide the transactions that believers have with each other and their transactions (the kind of relationship they build) with God. By *ʿamal* (literally ‘doing’, ‘practice’) is meant implementation of what the texts preach. Strength in *fiqh* is not considered only in relation to expertise about individual texts or even individual chapters of *fiqh*, but to their connectedness and proportions, their harmony altogether. Weakness in this regard – we could call it narrowness in *fiqh* – can lead to distortions in *ʿamal*. So, for example, it may be that an individual, isolated from the collective knowledge of the community of scholars, learns the detail of obligations related to prayer and presence in the mosque. However, if he does not also know what is allowed or forbidden regarding transactions in the marketplace, and then rules that women must be dressed

and behave in such-and-such a way, without allowance for the difference in conditions between doing the prayer and doing business, between mosque and marketplace, he is likely to issue rulings that constrain women's doing business well, making it uncomfortable, eventually impossible, for them. For 'doing business' we might substitute 'seeking knowledge' or another activity that we know to be permitted or commended by the religion, and similar outcomes result. A rich, broad *fiqh* enables a rich, broad *ʿamal* so that individual and society live the largest area of their lives within the rule of their *islām*, their submission to God. The inverse is to inhabit a narrow core of behaviour ruled by Islam, while all the rest of life, piece by piece, is yielded up to (or seized by) the rule of non-Islam. This core can then harden into a token or symbol of identity, encouraging narrow sectarianism and destroying the plural solidarity of the *ummah*.

Fiqh and *ʿamal* are the twin pillars on which is founded the community's recognition of the greater authority, among the Companions, of ʿAbdullāh ibn Masʿūd, Ubayy ibn Kaʿb, Muʿadh ibn Jabal, Zayd ibn Thābit, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAbbās, and others. Similarly, the community did not bow to the authority, after them, of Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab, Alqamah, al-Aswad, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn, Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī, ʿAṭāʾ ibn Abī Rabāḥ, ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī, Ḥammād ibn Abī Sulaymān, Abū Hanīfah, al-Awzāʿī, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Mālik, al-Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī, al-Shāfiʿī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, and others, except because of their excellence in combining scholarship with *fiqh* and *ʿamal*. Did such authority accrue only to men and did women have no part in it? The answer is No; and I have provided in the foregoing chapters several examples of women whose authority was respected by their male peers in the scholarly community. In this chapter, because the precedent of the Companions and their Successors is so decisive for Muslims, I have concentrated mainly on examples from that period.

THE FIQH OF THE WOMEN SCHOLARS

A more precise definition of *fiqh* is ‘understanding the divine command by derivation from the Book of God and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam*’. We must begin therefore with the women scholars’ command of these primary sources of the *dīn*.

Understanding the Qurʾān

The best recitation of the Qurʾān is the kind that enables its meaning to enter the heart. Ibn Abī Mulaykah has narrated from Umm Salamah that she said: ‘The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – recited the Qurʾān, pausing at the end of every verse. He would recite *al-ḥamdu li-l-lāhi rabbi l-ʿālamīn*, then he would pause and then he would recite *ar-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*, then he would pause and then he would recite, *māliki yawmi d-dīn*.’¹ All the major jurists in the history of Islam began their education by memorizing the Qurʾān, learning its different recitations, and gaining expertise in its interpretation. Women have also built this strong relationship with the Book, the fruit of which is that it is fully internalized, and they become fluent in it, speaking from it like a mother tongue.

In the later period, there was Fāṭimah bint Abī ʿAlī al-Daqqāq al-Naysābūriyyah (d. 480). Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī said about her: ‘She was the pride of the women of her time, no parallel of her has been seen for her character. She was a scholar of the Book of God and virtuous.’² Al-Ṣayrafī said: ‘She knew the Book of God by heart, recited it day and night and knew its meaning.’³ Sayyidah bint ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Ghirmāṭiyyah (d. 647),

¹ AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Sunan*, *Qirāʾah*, bāb *fātiḥat al-Kitāb*. ² AL-DHAHABĪ, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām* (sub anno 471–80), 269. ³ AL-ṢAYRAFĪNĪ, *al-Muntakhab min kitāb al-siyāq li al-taʾrīkh Naysābūr*, 459.

brought up in Murcia (Spain), excelled in Qur'ānic studies.¹ In the ninth century Bayram bint Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Dayrūṭīyyah mastered the seven recitations under the tuition of al-Shams ibn al-Ṣā'igh, studying in the company of his daughter Fāṭimah. Then this Fāṭimah moved, along with her father, to Jerusalem, and practised reading of the Qur'ān with teachers there.² Fāṭimah bint Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Dayrūṭī (9th c.), also excelled in the seven recitations and memorized *al-Shāṭibiyyah*. She studied with several teachers before going on to teach the different recitations to both men and women.³

I turn now to examples of the women's understanding of the Qur'an. 'Urwah asked 'Ā'ishah about God's saying (in the verses beginning with *al-Nisā'*, 4. 3) *And if you fear that you will not deal fairly with the orphan girls [...]*:

'Ā'ishah said: O nephew: An orphan girl would be under the care of a guardian with whom she shared property. Her guardian, attracted by her wealth and beauty, would intend to marry her without giving her a just dowry [i.e. the same dowry as any other person might give her]. So such guardians were forbidden to do that unless they did justice to their female wards and gave them the highest dowry their peers might get. They were commanded [by God] to marry women of their choice other than those orphan girls. [...] The people asked God's Messenger's for instructions after the revelation of this divine verse, whereupon God revealed [4. 127]: *They consult you concerning women [...]* [...] And the statement of God, *And yet whom you desire to marry*, as any of you refrains from marrying an orphan girl [under his guardianship] when she is lacking in property and beauty. [...] So they were forbidden to marry those orphan girls whose wealth and beauty they had a desire for unless with justice, and that was because they would refrain from marrying them if they were lacking in property and beauty.⁴

¹See K. *al-Dhayl wa-l-takmilah li-kitābi al-Mawṣūl wa-l-ṣilah (al-sifr al-thāmin)*, 487. AL-DHAHABĪ says: 'She knew the whole Qur'ān by heart.' *Ta'rikh al-Islam (sub anno 641–650)*, 361. ²AL-SAKHĀWĪ, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, xii. 15. ³*Ibid.*, 106. ⁴AL-BAKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Sharikah, bāb sharikah al-yatīm wa ahl al-mirāth*.

ʿĀʾishah's interpretation of these Qurʾānic verses became very popular among the jurists. The compilations of ḥadīth and books of *tafsīr* contain many other examples of her *tafsīr*. Saʿūd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Funaysān has put together a 500-page book of them, *Marwiyyat umm al-muʾminīn ʿĀʾishah fī l-tafsīr*,¹ culled from the books of the famous *mufasssirūn* like Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, al-Baghawī, Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Qurṭubī, al-Khāzin, Ibn Kathīr, al-Suyūṭī, al-Shawkānī.

The *tafsīr* of other women is also recorded or attested in the sources. For example, al-Tirmidhī has recorded the *tafsīr* of Umm Salamah.² Al-Subkī has reported about the mother of al-Shāfiʿī, whom he describes as devout, God-wary and among the most intelligent of people, that she and the mother of Bishr al-Mirrīsī were summoned to witness in a case before the judge in Makkah. The judge wanted to separate them in order to cross-examine them separately. The mother of al-Shāfiʿī said to him: 'You have no authority to do that as God says in the Qurʾan *if one of the two errs [in what she remembers], then one of the two may remind (tudhakkira) the other [al-Baqarah, 2. 282].*' The judge did not separate the two witnesses after that intervention although, technically, according to the doctrine of al-Shāfiʿī, it is allowable when necessary. Al-Subkī comments:

This is good derivation, strong meaning, and fine argument. Though the known thing in the *madhhab* of her son is an absolute opinion (*itlaqu l-qawl*) that, if the judge has suspicions about the witnesses, it is better for him to separate them [in order to question and probe their testimony for collusion etc.]. Her word is clear in exempting the women on the basis of the proof that she mentioned and there is no harm in that.³

¹Saʿūd ibn ʿAbdillāh al-Funaysān, *Marwiyyāt umm al-muʾminīn ʿĀʾishah fī l-tafsīr* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Tawbah, 1413). ²AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmiʿ, Tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, bāb min sūrat al-Baqarah. ³Tāj al-Dīn AL-SUBKĪ, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿīyah al-kubrā*, ii. 179–80.

Understanding the ḥadīth

Women are also known for their understanding of the import of ḥadīths and competence in basing argument on them. Some examples of that have come earlier. Here, I mention the case of the maidservant Barīrah. She had been a slave of Banū Hilāl, till ‘Ā’ishah emancipated her. The case contains many fine legal points; the ḥadīth could not have become, as it did, a text that the jurists depended upon if Barīrah and ‘Ā’ishah had not been aware of those fine points and preserved and conveyed them accurately. The whole incident is dispersed by al-Bukhārī in different parts of his *Ṣaḥīḥ* the better expose its relevance in different legal contexts. I summarize here from one occurrence of the Barīrah ḥadīth in the *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

‘Ā’ishah narrated that Barīrah came to her for help in drawing up the *mukātabah* (the emancipation contract whereby slaves were enabled to buy their freedom over a period of time). ‘Ā’ishah was willing to pay the whole sum, but required that Barīrah should then come into her care under the Arab system of *walā’*, which enabled an individual or clan to extend their family’s protection to someone who had no tribal connections. Barīrah’s owners refused this condition. They said to her: ‘If [‘Ā’ishah] is seeking reward from God [for freeing a slave] she can do so, but your *walā’* will be ours.’ ‘Ā’ishah reported this to the Prophet who said: ‘Buy and emancipate her, as the *walā’* is for the one who emancipates. Then [on an occasion after that] God’s Messenger stood up and said: What about those who stipulate conditions that are not present in God’s law? [No matter] who imposes conditions that are not present in God’s law, those conditions will be invalid, even if he imposed them a hundred times. God’s judgement is the truth and more solidly established [than any man-made custom or law].’¹

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Mukātab*, bāb *isti‘ānah al-mukātab wa su’āli-hi al-nās*.

Women jurists

‘Ā’ishah was, among the Companions, men and women, a principal resource for juristic opinion. ‘Aṭā’ ibn Abī Rabāḥ said: “‘Ā’ishah was the most expert in jurisprudence among all the people.”¹ Masrūq said: ‘I have seen the great jurists among the Companions of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – asking her about the law of inheritance.”² ‘Urwah said: ‘I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable of the *fiqh* than ‘Ā’ishah.”³

Among the Companions Umm Salamah is also considered to have been a jurist, and her opinions are well recorded in the books of ḥadīth and *fiqh*. Another Companion well-known for her knowledge and expertise in the *sunnahs* is al-Rubayyī‘ bint Mu‘awwidh. Ibn ‘Abbās, in spite of his excellent knowledge of the Book of God and juristic aspects of law, consulted her.⁴ So also did ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar, famously on a judgement related to divorce law during the rule of ‘Uthmān.⁵

There is also record of women publicly intervening in court judgements in the expectation of being able to prevent grave miscarriage of justice. Mālik narrates from Yaḥyā ibn Sa‘īd that he said: ‘Abū Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Amr ibn Ḥazm [the qāḍī of Madinah] informed me that he was holding a Nabṭī who had stolen iron rings in prison [and intending] to cut off his hand. Then ‘Amrah bint ‘Abd al-Raḥmān sent to me her client called Umayyah. [...] She came to me while I was among the people and said: Your aunt ‘Amrah says: O nephew, are you holding a Nabṭī [in custody] for a minor thing that has been mentioned to me, and do you mean to cut off his hand? I said: Yes. She said: ‘Amrah says to you that there is no cutting off of the hand except for stealing something worth a quarter of a dinar or more than that. [...] Then I released the Nabṭī.”⁶ This intervention by ‘Amrah happened at the time when the city was

¹ IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Isti‘āb*, ii. 744; AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ii. 185. ² IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Isti‘āb*, ii. 744. ³ AL-MIZZĪ, *Tabdhīb al-kamāl*, xxxv. 234. ⁴ IBN ‘ABD AL-BARR, *al-Isti‘āb*, ii. 731. ⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ MĀLIK, *al-Muwattā’*, 437–38.

graced by the residence of the much renowned ‘Seven Jurists of Madinah’.

It is a measure of how well respected knowledge was that even a well-informed slave could on occasion correct someone of established reputation. Al-Ash‘ab, a jurist of the school of Mālik, narrates that he was in Madinah, and he wanted to buy vegetables from a girl, and the people at that time would not sell their vegetables except for bread, for that is what they needed. He told her to wait till evening, then come and he would make the exchange then. She said: ‘That is not permissible.’ Ash‘ab asked why and she explained: ‘Because it is selling of food for food [which must be done directly, hand over hand, whereas what you are proposing is] not hand over hand.’¹ When Ash‘ab asked about the girl, he discovered that she was a slave in the household of Imām Mālik.

This respect for knowledge whoever had it was not confined to the formative period of Islam. I have given several examples from later centuries of women whose jurisprudence was respected and admired by their male peers. One scholar particularly worth mentioning is Umm Zaynab Fāṭimah bint ‘Abbās ibn ‘Alī al-Faḥ al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). She learnt *fiqh* with Shaykh Shams al-Dīn and other Maqdisī scholars.² Al-Dhahabī says: ‘I visited her and I liked her character, humility and God-wariness. She knew *fiqh* well. Ibn Taymiyyah was amazed by her knowledge and intelligence and praised her fulsomely.’³ Ibn Kathīr says: ‘I heard Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymiyyah praising her a lot and lauding her virtue and knowledge. He stated that she knew most of *al-Mughnī* by heart. And [he] used to prepare for her many juristic issues [adequately suited to] her questions and her sharp understanding.’⁴

¹MASHHŪR, *Ināyat al-nisā*², 122. ²AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juzʿ al-mafqūd min Siyar aʿlām al-nubalā*³, 416. ³*Ibid.* ⁴IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah*, sub anno 714.

Women giving fatwas

Giving fatwas is conditional on having the appropriate degree of knowledge, not on gender. Imām Nawawī has stated explicitly that a woman can give fatwas.¹ Ibn Muṣliḥ has also affirmed it;² so too has the greatest of Ibn Taymiyyah's disciples, Ibn al-Qayyim.³ Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhiri says: 'If a woman attains *fiqh* in the sciences of the religion it would be incumbent upon us to accept her warning. That actually happened. These are wives of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*, and his woman Companions. Religious rulings have been narrated from them and the proof is established by their transmission. There is no difference among our companions [i.e. fellow Zāhiri jurists] in this regard. Among them, other than the wives of the Prophet, *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam*, were: Umm Sulaym, Umm Ḥarām, and Umm 'Atiyyah.⁴ Ibn Ḥazm counted the Companions known for giving fatwas as 130. Of those, seven are known for giving a lot of fatwas; of those seven, one was 'Ā'ishah.

Maḥmūd ibn Labīd says: 'Ā'ishah used to give fatwas in the time of 'Umar and 'Uthmān until she died; [those] great Companions of the Prophet, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, used to refer to her.⁵ The great jurists among the Successors used to attend on her to get her juristic opinions.⁶ Abū Ḥanīfah narrated from Hammād, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad ibn Yazīd, the great jurist of Iraq, that he asked *umm al-mu'minin* 'Ā'ishah: 'What cuts the prayer? She said: Listen, O people of Iraq, you think that a donkey, a dog, a woman, and a cat [passing in front of the one praying] cuts the prayer. You have equated us women with them?! Push away [whoever is coming in front of you] as much as is possible for you. For nothing cuts the prayer.' Muḥammad al-Shaybānī says: 'We hold the opinion of 'Ā'ishah, and it is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah.'⁷ Sometimes it is women who put to

¹ AL-NAWAWĪ, *Rawḍat al-tālibīn*, xi. 109. ² IBN AL-MUSLIḤ, *al-Mubdi'*, x. 25. ³ IBN QAYYIM AL-JAWZIYYAH, *I'lām al-muwaqqi'in*, iv. 169. ⁴ IBN ḤAZM, *al-Iḥkām fī -uṣūl al-aḥkām*, iii. 324. ⁵ IBN SA'D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, ii. 375. ⁶ *Ibid.* ⁷ AL-SHAYBĀNĪ, *K. al-Āthār*, 38.

‘Ā’ishah issues that concerned them; here is an example from the domain of commerce:

‘Abd al-Razzāq says: Ma‘mar and [Sufyān] al-Thawrī narrated to us from Abū Ishāq, who narrated from his wife saying that she called among a company of women on ‘Ā’ishah. A woman said to her: O *umm al-mu’minin*, I had a slave girl, whom I sold to Zayd ibn Arqam for 800 with deferred payment of the price. Then I bought her from him for 600 and I paid those 600 on the spot and I wrote him 800 as debt. ‘Ā’ishah said: By God, how evil is what you bought! How evil is what you bought! Tell Zayd ibn Arqam that he has invalidated his jihād with the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – except if he repents. [Then ‘Ā’ishah explained the issue further; this kind of transaction is a trick to lend money for interest.]¹

Debate between men and women

That women can raise issues and discuss them with men should be beyond dispute. The wives of the Prophet sometimes did so; a sūrah of the Qur’ān was sent down concerning the discussion of a woman with him.

Once the caliph ‘Umar gave a speech asking the people not to inflate dowries, and told them to keep them small. An old woman stood up and said: ‘God says in the Qur’an [*al-Nisā*’, 4. 20]: *And if you mean to take a wife in place of another and you have given one of them a qintar [of gold] do not take a thing [back] from it.*’ Possibly the woman had in mind that a large dowry might serve to deter a husband from divorcing a wife in order to take another, but at very least the verse clearly states the permissibility of a large dowry. The caliph responded: ‘The woman is right and ‘Umar is wrong.’²

It is not always the case that the questioner is right, but the right of questioning is what is being illustrated here: ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd had said: ‘The curse of God is on women who wear tattoos...’ That came to the knowledge of a woman of Banū

¹‘ABD AL-RAZZĀQ, *al-Muṣannaf*, viii. 185. ²IBN HAJAR, *Fath al-bārī*, *Nikāḥ*.

Asad called Umm Ya'qūb, who came to him to protest. He said: 'Why should I not curse one who has been cursed by the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu 'alay-hi wa sallam* – and who is mentioned in the Book of God? She said: I have read the whole Qur'ān and I did not find in it what you say. He said, if you have read it you must have found [it]. Did you not read in it [59. 7] *Whatever the Messenger gives you take it and whatever he forbids refrain from it*. She said: Yes. He said: The Messenger has forbidden it. She said: I think your wife does it. He said: Then go and look. She went and looked and she did not find what she was after. Then 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd said: 'If she did that I would not live with her.'¹

Reliance of the jurists on the fiqh of women

I illustrated earlier how the imāms among jurists relied on ḥadīths that are narrated exclusively by women. There are also examples of their relying on the *fiqh* of women. Examples can be found for most, if not all, the various 'chapters' or divisions of *fiqh*. Imām Mālik has referred in his *Muwattā* to the fatwas of the great *tābi'iyah*, 'Amrah bint 'Abd al-Raḥmān, on issues related to ḥajj. Abū Ḥanīfah relied on the saying of 'Ā'ishah (narrated from Yazīd ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, from an old woman of al-'Atik) that: 'There is no harm in doing *'umrah* in any time of the year that you want except five days – the day of 'Arafah, the day of *nahr* and the [three] days of *tashrīq*.' Muḥammad al-Shaybānī, the disciple of Abū Ḥanīfah, confirms that as the opinion of his master and of their school, 'with one exception, that is, we say that [on the] evening of 'Arafah, as [also on] the morning of 'Arafah – there is no harm in doing *'umrah* at that time.'² Abū Ḥanīfah followed the ruling of 'Ā'ishah with regard to an issue in *ṭahārah*, namely when a bath becomes obligatory after sexual relations. He ruled, also according to 'Ā'ishah's practice,

¹ AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Tafsīr*, bāb *wa mā ātā-kum al-rasūl fa-khudhū-h*, MUSLIM, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *Libās*, bāb *taḥrīm fi'l al-wāṣilah*. ² AL-SHAYBĀNĪ, *K. al-Āthār*, 84.

that if a woman leads other women in the *ṣalāh*, she should stand in the middle of the front row rather than out in front of the front row.¹ And, as a last example, he ruled in favour of the lawfulness of a father in need being provided from the earnings of his children on the basis of ‘Ā’ishah’s saying, which he narrated from Ḥammād from Ibrāhīm, that: ‘The best that you eat is what comes out of your earning, and your descendants are your earning.’ Muḥammad al-Shaybānī said: ‘There is no harm for the father, if he is in need, to eat from the wealth of his son in the normal way (*ma‘rūf*). But if he is rich and he took something from the wealth of his son, then it is a debt upon him. It is the opinion of Abū Ḥanīfah.’²

The women’s holding opinions that others disputed

Ibn Kathīr said that ‘Ā’ishah is distinguished for having noted and formed a judgement on a variety of issues (*masā’il*) that are not found with any of the other Companions. Moreover, she had ‘unique preferences’ on some matters, that is, opinions in which she differed from others. There are reports (*akhbār*) about her opinions, and others’ counter-opinions, which later imāms have collected.³

It is inevitable that when jurists do *ijtihād*, that is, exert conscience and reason to reach their judgement on a matter, sometimes their judgement is accepted by or conforms to the majority or consensus view, and sometimes is rejected by the majority and the consensus goes against it. All the great jurists, men as well as women, have held opinions that others disputed. Where the primary texts are not explicit and incontrovertible, it was their right to adhere to those opinions without pressure to conform.⁴ The strongest evidence for the respect that was accorded to women’s right to independent reasoning within the

¹ AL-SHAYBĀNĪ, K. *al-Āthār*, 57. ² *Ibid.*, 198. ³ IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, sub anno 58. ⁴ There is an extended discussion of this issue in Yahya MICHOT’s annotated translation of the discourses of Ibn Taymiyyah on *Power and Religion* (Oxford: Interface Publications, forthcoming Nov. 2007).

same boundaries as men, is that they publicly held to, and continued to teach, opinions that had been publicly refused. I gave the detail of two examples of that in Chapter 1, where the isolated women holding their own were Fāṭimah bint Qays and ʿĀʾishah. Similarly, idiosyncratic expression of an individual's personal preference in minor details of practice was also quite acceptable: for example, the great Syrian *tābiʿiyyah* Umm al-Dardā' when sitting in the prayer used to adopt the posture usual for men rather than women.

ʿAMAL

One who has attained scholarly expertise in the knowledge of the rites but does not implement it, one who has accumulated vast knowledge of minor and major sins and does not use it to avoid those sins, or who knows the description of good deeds and good character but does not strive to adorn his life with those – all his knowledge has been useless and he is deluded in his religion and in himself. Imām Mālik said: 'Knowledge is not by abundance of narrations; rather, knowledge is a light that God puts in the heart.' Abū ʿĀṣim says: 'One who seeks the knowledge of ḥadīth, he is [seeking] the highest matters of the world, so he must be the best of all people.'¹ Fāṭimah bint al-Ḥusayn narrates from Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī that he said: 'The Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – said: God loves high and noble characters, and dislikes low characters.'² Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī said: 'Whenever one hears something of the manners of the Prophet – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – one should hold fast to it.'³ Qāsim ibn Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī said: 'We were at the door of Bishr ibn al-Ḥārith, he came [out] to us. We said: O Abū Naṣr, narrate ḥadīth to us. He said: Do you pay the *ḡakāb* [that is due] on ḥadīth? I said to him: O Abū Naṣr, is

¹ AL-KHAṬĪB AL-BAGHDĀDĪ, *al-Jāmiʿ li-akblāq al-rāwī wa ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, i. 78. ²*Ibid.*, 92. ³*Ibid.*, 42.

there *ḡakāh* [that is due] on ḡadīth? He said: Yes. When you hear ḡadīth or remembrance of God you should apply it.¹

It would fill another book to relate all the ways in which the *muḡaddithāt* paid the *ḡakāh* on the knowledge they accrued and transmitted to others. In any case, the virtues – devotion in worship and continual remembrance of God; charity, whether giving of their time or their wealth; gentleness and kindness in their bearing, speech and manners; modesty and self-discipline in their dress and in their taking a share in the goods of this world; integrity and truthfulness in scholarship (meaning their recording and transmitting the knowledge that came to them from reliable sources, even if they did not like the doctrine or affiliation of those sources); humility and fear of God; love of the Prophet and his *Sunnah* in the full breadth of it; firmness, at times even implacability, in the face of speech or actions offensive to or corrosive of the *dīn*; and an enduring concern for the well-being of the *ummah* such that they were able to dedicate their lives to learning and teaching – can be illustrated just as well from the lives of the *muḡaddithūn* as of the *muḡaddithāt*. But we should acknowledge that for the latter the effort of will to take up and sustain such a life – absent the incentive of rewards in terms of employment or reputation in the world – had to be that much greater for women than men.

I here cite two incidents, side by side, that capture well the tone and temperament of Islamic teaching. Both demonstrate a strong consciousness of being seen by God, a powerful steadfastness, and a passion to improve human understanding and conduct.

Umm al-muʿminin Ḥafṣah, the daughter of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, called on him in the final moments of his life. He had been stabbed by an assassin and there was no possibility of his recovering. During ʿUmar’s rule, the Muslims had defeated two long-lasting and far-flung empires, secured the territories and established the major forms of the institutions that have ever

¹ *Ibid.*, 143–44.

since defined the heartlands of Islam. His son, ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿUmar, was already present at his death-bed. Miqdām ibn Maʿdīkarib narrates:

When ʿUmar suffered [his wounds], Ḥafṣah called on him and said: O Companion of the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – O in-law of the Messenger of God, O Commander of the Believers... ʿUmar said to Ibn ʿUmar: ʿAbdullāh, help me to sit up, I cannot bear what I am hearing. So ʿAbdullāh raised him up, leaning [him] against his [own] chest. Then ʿUmar said to her: 'I am forbidding you, by the right that I have over you, from bemoaning me after this. As for your eye, I do not own it. For when a dead person is bemoaned for something that is not in him the angels hate him.'¹

The second incident concerns Umm Sulaym and is related from Anas ibn Mālīk. The son of Umm Sulaym was ill. While her husband, Abū Ṭalḥah, had gone to the mosque, the boy passed away. Umm Sulaym made the preliminary arrangements for that and told her people not to inform Abū Ṭalḥah. When he returned home she set out his dinner in the normal way. He ate his dinner, then husband and wife had relations with each other. Then:

when it was the end of the night, she said: Abū Ṭalḥah, did you not see [how it was] with such-and-such family who borrowed something, then they kept it; when they were asked to return it, it was very hard on them. He said: They were not fair [in their attitude]. She said: Your son was a loan from God and He has taken him [back]. He uttered the supplication and praised God. In the morning, he came to the Messenger of God, *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam*. When he saw him, he said: May God bless the two of you in your night. Then she bore ʿAbdullāh ibn Abī Ṭalḥah.²

Umm Sulaym's teaching of how believers should manage grief may seem gentler than ʿUmar's. Indeed it is; she has the same wisdom and with it 'the woman's touch'. Yet ʿUmar's rebuke is not without tenderness, for he does not ask Ḥafṣah to

¹IBN SAʿD, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, iii. 361. ²IBN AL-ATHĪR, *Usd al-ghābah*, iii. 285–86.

control her tears. Rather, he was concerned – being well aware of the achievements of his reign – that no Muslim should build for him a mausoleum, neither in words nor in stones. The Taj Mahals of the Islamic world belong to a far different age, a different tone and temperament.

Some measured strictness, such as we hear in ‘Umar’s voice – one marvels that he could find energy for it at that moment – is necessary to defend the *Sunnah* against corrosion. For Muslims, the *Sunnah* is to be defended against one’s own family, even against one’s own preferences. Ṣafīyyah bint Abī ‘Ubayd al-Thaqafīyyah narrates that, some days after Abū Sufyān died, his daughter, *umm al-mu’minin* Umm Ḥabībah, called for perfume and applied it to her arms and cheeks. Then she said:

I was in no need to do this if I had not heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – say: It is not permitted for any woman who believes in God and the Last Day to be in mourning (*iḥdād*) more than three days for any deceased, except for a husband. For him she is to be in mourning four months and ten days.¹

Sometimes the effort to correct is done by feeling or expressing aversion: ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Urwah ibn Zubayr narrates:

I said to my grandmother Asmā’ [bint Abī Bakr]: How were the Companions of the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ‘alay-hi wa sallam* – when they heard the Qur’an? She said: Their eyes shed tears, the hairs of their body stood on end, [just] as God has described them. I said: Here are some people when any of them hear the Qur’an they fall unconscious. She said: I seek refuge in God from the outcast satan.²

Yazīd ibn al-Aṣamm relates that a relative of *umm al-mu’minin* Maymūnah called on her. She found on him the smell of drink. She said: ‘If you do not go to the Muslims so they can flog you, then never call upon me.’³

Women in the formative period certainly did not lack courage to challenge and correct misbelief and misconduct. The

¹ IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 100. ² IBN ‘ASĀKIR, *Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq, Tarājim al-nisā’*, 20; see also IBN SA‘D, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*, viii. 253. ³ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, ii. 244..

best of them were not waiting for others to establish the *dīn* for them but took that responsibility, as did the best of the men. Here are two examples of women 'speaking truth to power', albeit a power willing to be spoken to and told off:

Qatādah says:

ʿUmar came out from the mosque and with him was al-Jārūd al-ʿAbdī. There was a woman on the main road. ʿUmar greeted her. She answered [his greeting] and [then] said: Be off, O ʿUmar! I have seen you [when you were] called ʿUmayr [little ʿUmar] in the marketplace of ʿUkaz, tending the sheep with your stick. Then the days passed and you were called ʿUmar. Then the days passed and [now] you are called Commander of the Believers. So, be wary of God in respect of the subjects [whom you govern]. And she continued advising him. Then al-Jārūd said: Woman, you have said a lot to the Commander of the Believers. ʿUmar said: Let her be. Do you not know her? This is Khawlah bint Ḥakīm, the wife of ʿUbayd ibn al-Ṣāmit, whose word was heard by God from above the seven heavens.¹ So it is most fitting for ʿUmar to listen to her.²

Zayd ibn Wāqid narrates from ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān about the counsel he was given, before he became caliph, by Barīrah, the slave emancipated by ʿĀʾishah:

I used to sit with [i.e. attend the class of] Barīrah before assuming the caliphate in Madīnah. She said: ʿAbd al-Malik, I see in you some qualities, and you are worthy to assume this matter. Now if you do assume this matter, then avoid bloodshed. For I have heard the Messenger of God – *ṣalla l-lāhu ʿalay-hi wa sallam* – say: After having sighted the gate of Paradise the man will be pushed away from it on account of a little blood of a Muslim that he shed unlawfully.³

Not only in the formative period but throughout Islam's history, there have been great women teachers, famous for their preaching and their effort to deepen and reform the Muslims'

¹The caliph is here alluding to the sending down of the opening verses of *al-Mujādalah* (58. 1 *seq.*) when Khawlah brought her dispute with ʿUbayd ibn al-Ṣāmit before the Prophet. ²IBN ʿABD AL-BARR, *al-Istīʿāb*, ii. 723. ³*Ibid.*, 708.

understanding of the *dīn*. Some of them funded, some lived and taught in, *ribāṭs* or retreats built for just this purpose. I close with a second mention of a famous reformer of the seventh–eighth century – not Ibn Taymiyyah, but one Ibn Taymiyyah revered and praised highly – great scholar, jurist, ascetic, leader of the women of her time and preacher: Umm Zaynab Fāṭimah bint ‘Abbās al-Baghdādiyyah (d. 714). Al-Dhahabī says:

A large number of women benefited from her and repented. She had abundance of knowledge, was content with little, keen to benefit people and give sermons with sincerity, God-wariness and for [the sake of] commanding the good. The women of Damascus [and] then [after her fame had spread, and she moved, to Cairo] the women of Egypt were reformed by her. She had a lot of popularity and influence over the hearts [of people].¹

Ibn Kathīr says:

She was among the scholars and women of virtue. She commanded good and forbade evil, and opposed the Aḥmadiyyah sect for their [illicit] friendship with women and young boys. And she criticized their states (*aḥwāl*) and the thinking and arguments [*uṣūl*] of the people of *bid‘ah* and others. In [all] that she did what men are unable to do.²

¹ AL-DHAHABĪ, *Dhayl al-‘Ibar*, 80; AL-YĀFI‘Ī, *Mir‘āt al-jinān*, iv. 254. See also AL-DHAHABĪ, *al-Juz‘ al-mafqūd* in *Siyar a‘lām al-nubalā’*, 416. ² IBN KATHĪR, *al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah*, sub anno 714.

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This book is an adaptation of the *Muqaddimah* or Preface to Mohammad Akram's 40-volume biographical dictionary (in Arabic) of the Muslim women who studied and taught hadith. It demonstrates the central role women had in preserving the Prophet's teaching, which remains the master-guide to understanding the Qur'an as rules and norms for life. Within the bounds of modesty in dress and manners, women routinely attended and gave classes in the major mosques and madrasas, travelled intensively for 'the knowledge', transmitted and critiqued hadith, issued fatwas, etc. Some of the most renowned scholars among men have depended on, and praised, the scholarship of their women teachers. The women scholars enjoyed considerable public authority in society, not exceptionally, but as the norm. The huge body of information reviewed in *al-Muhaddithat* is essential to understanding the role of women in Islamic society, their past achievement and future potential. Hitherto it has been so dispersed as to be 'hidden'. Akram's dictionary will greatly facilitate further study, contextualization and analysis.

Mohammad Akram, currently a fellow of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, is an alumnus of the prestigious Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow. He has written many books on hadith, *fiqh*, Islamic biography, and Arabic grammar. This is his first major publication in English.

The cover shows the study journeys of Fatimah bint Sa'd al-Khayr, and of a few of her principal teachers and students. Her family moved from Valencia to the western edge of China; she died in Cairo in 600 AH. (Full map and details in ch. 3.)

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